



She Got Game

AN ORGANISATIONAL GUIDEBOOK



Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



Welcome to the 'She Got Game' GUIDEBOOK FOR ORGANISATIONS

OUR TASK: TO BE FLEXIBLE AND WILLING TO LEARN FROM THE 'FUTURE AS IT EMERGES'. (SCHARMER, 2016)

Despite numerous initiatives over the past five decades, the hard fact remains that, throughout Europe, organisations have failed to make any significant impact on the levels of young women incorporating healthy levels of sport and physical activity within their lifestyle. Schools, community youth organisations and sport organisations are well aware of the physical, social and mental benefits of sport and physical activity and have consciously made many well-meaning attempts to transform this reality.

However, regardless of the numerous good intentions, the cycle of disengagement by young women as they journey through their late adolescence into early adulthood remains. To be more effective at reversing this disengagement, organisations need to have a better critical awareness of the systemic structures and modes of thoughts that have a deep and enduring influence on how and why these young women make the lifestyle choices that they do.

This organisational support package has been developed using research, learning and experience of working in sport and physical activity. Its primary purpose is to facilitate a process of reflection within your organisation in order to recognise the challenges posed in engaging young women and girls into sport and physical activity.

The content of this package has been designed to help you unpick the issues and provide your organisation with a training process that will be informative, enlightening but also potentially 'disruptive'. The challenge we are all attempting to overcome is to help organisations to step out of the failures of the past and enter into a creative leadership process that will hopefully disrupt the cycle of young women's dis-engagement from sport and physical activity.

Being successful in this learning journey will require your organisation, and the people within it, to be prepared to take a reflective step back and review what may be some cherished assumptions about sport and physical activity. As many of the barriers to unequal gender participation are located in historic and systemic patterns of behaviour, it should not be too much of a surprise that a key part of the task that lies ahead will be to work out how you intend to challenge this system.

As you work through this guidebook you may need further explanations with regards to some of the processes. Additional resources and contact information for dedicated support can be found at www.shegotgame.eu. Our aim is support your organisation to be disruptive and to step out of the historical reproduction that exists around women and girls participation in sport and physical activity. It is time to think, and act, differently.

THE ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT PROCESS HAS THE FOLLOWING STEPS





Recognising Reality

This 'Recognising Reality' stage asks organisations to undertake an honest appraisal of their current position of engaging girls and young women into sport and physical activity.

How the sport and physical activity system operates on a day to day basis is not only governed by an established bureaucratic system, but also by unwritten rules, assumptions and attitudes and it is these that create the mind-set that exists in the sector. As with any industry, many of the mind-sets that exist are deep rooted and embedded.

In most cases, the sport and physical activity mind-set is one of good intention. For most of us, sport and physical activity started as a hobby and has turned into a career or a voluntary experience that is central to our everyday lives.

We look at the situation from a positivist position. Sport and physical activity has made a positive contribution to our lives, and we want this positivity to be experienced by others.

However, if we are truly honest with ourselves, the sporting system is underpinned with inequality on many levels and many of the issues present a significant challenge. We may have avoided them, but many others have not.

Girls and young women in sport receive less media attention than men. An analysis of 35,000 hours of sports programming concluded only 4% of the coverage was dedicated to women's sports.

There are significantly different levels of pay that exists between men's and women sport. For example the best paid male footballer earned a salary of \$92million in 2020, whereas the top paid woman earner \$518,000; 177 times more.

Within our sporting infrastructure, there is a lack of women representation within senior and board level positions. Research by the UK based organisation, Women in Sport identified that women made up approximately 40% of board or senior level positions across the sporting infrastructure. For the majority of organisations women's representation was at less than 30%.

In many cases, sport is often conceptualised as a male preserve and presented as such. Sport, for some, is seen as masculine, competitive and exclusive. The values that sport presents, and represents, are often at odds with what girls and young women value.

Given the facts above, the well-established, preconceived assumptions of who sport and physical activity benefits, and how it does so, needs challenging.



Reflecting on this requires an honest appraisal from you and your organisation. Questions to consider are:

Why is the sector not achieving gender equality in sport and physical activity participation?

What is the sector doing wrong?

What can your organisation do better at to contribute to this agenda?

The big question to consider is:

Is the mind-set from which we, and the organisational systems in which we work operate within, appropriate when it comes to creatively interacting with young women who currently have little or no interest in sport and/or healthy levels of physical activity?

Failure to develop a 'culture of dialogue' of this kind will impact on your ability to enact change; optimism of the intellect and pessimism of the will is required.



Freeing the Future

The Freeing the Future stage allow you to vision what you want to be different when it comes to engaging girls and young women in sport and physical activity.

Enacting real change requires a whole systems approach. Therefore working with, and influencing, your network to develop alignment to the right vision is crucial.

In doing this, there is a need to recognise the tension that may exist in your network. Not all organisations will necessarily think like you when it comes to a vision of getting girls and young women engaged in sport and physical activity. In many cases this is not the fault of other organisations in your network, it is the problem of the system as a whole.

In many cases we operate in a sector that lacks a sustainable structure, including long term funding, trained workforce or access to the relevant facilities. The project based nature of our activities can be problematic and can hinder sustainability; when the funding stops, the programme stops as well. Project work is not a long term solution and can hinder creativity.

Therefore, in terms of your organisation and its approaches to freeing the future, it is vital that the vested interest groups that have a voice are engaged. These range from funding organisations, to central and local government departments, to community sport organisations and practitioners to the diverse group that are broadly categorised under the term young women.

In Freeing the Future, the following steps can provide some structure but these could be completed in any order, depending on your organisational setting.



Creating a Vision

What it is that you want to achieve and why?

Achieving Network Agreement

You need to ensure you have agreement and buy in from your network. If all organisations are bought in, agreed, aligned the chances of success are significantly improved.

Developing Clarity

You need clarity around responsibility. Each organisation involved in this process needs to be clear on their own roles and responsibilities and this element is essential for reasons of accountability.

Promoting Accountability

If things do not progress as planned, reference can be made back to the visioning process. Organisationally you can step back and ask others some searching questions around accountability and engagement.

There is one final crucial and defining element that must be taken into consideration when freeing the future; that is how we understand the quality of our engagement with the people and communities we are seeking to work with.

As organisations we may need to make a shift our work from delivering opportunities to engage with sport and physical activity to a dynamic co-creational and prototyping process. Sports development is not something that should be done to people, it is a process of working with people and it is important for organisations to work out how they enact this change. It is crucial that the young women themselves need to be part of the process of change and our role should be to enable this process, not dictate it.



Delivering Differently

Delivering Differently challenges organisations to think differently about how they deliver.

The traditional model of promoting and providing sport sessions that focuses on tactics, techniques and skill improvement is not appropriate when looking to engage girls and young women who are currently non participants.

With regards to recruitment, we suggest the following four principles.



Communication is Crucial

Many girls need extra encouragement, especially if they are less experienced in sports participation. Reach out; approach them and talk to the girls to find out interests. Share with them what the activity will be like, what fun they will have, and what skills they will learn.



Utilise Networks

One of the best ways to get more girls involved is to encourage them to bring their friends. Girls often feel more comfortable trying something new if they have the support of their friends. Reach out to girl networks.



Create Connections

Consider from where you can recruit girls and young women. Set up simple activities close to school or college, or ideally on the school or college site itself. Invite the girls to play. Be accessible and talk to the girls about your offer. Provide a sign-up sheet, and follow up with phone calls or text messages. Where appropriate use social media (Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat) to help you in creating connections.



Involve Family (Especially other female family members)

Work with parents to educate them in the potential benefits that girls can experience through participating. Let the parents get to know who is leading the session and do simple things like providing your contact information. Engage the parents where possible; invite them to drop into a session once in a while; keep them up to date with what is going on in the sessions you offer.

Having recruited the girls and young women, the focus should turn to engagement and supporting the development of a new set of habits and behaviours around participating in sport and physical activity. We suggest the following eight principles as important points to consider with regards to developing engaging sessions.



Be welcoming:

Create the best environment

Create a fun, supportive and trusting atmosphere. Set norms and expectations that foster a safe space where everyone feels confident that they will not be judged for showing up as they are.



Be supportive:

Build trust and relationships

A trustful relationship between the coach and the girls is essential. As a coach you must be curious and emphatic and listen to the girls. Girls may need to talk about off-the-field issues.



Be adaptable:

Offer something for everyone

It is important to make sure to bridge the girls' different levels and to pay attention to the girls who are beginners and might need some extra support. A sport or activity that requires very specific and multiple skills at once can be difficult for girls who are not experienced in doing sports.



Be inclusive:

Focus on participation

Create a safe space where the girls can be themselves, and where it is acceptable to fail. Encourage the girls to be brave, not perfect. Positive performance is about showing the girls how to be good team players, to encourage each other, and cheer on each other.



Be reliable:

Show dedication and consistency

A good coaching team is important for a successful sport activity. Make sure to maintain stability both in terms of keeping a minimum of cancelled trainings but also in regard to the coaches.



Be social:

Encourage fun and friendship

Maintain a sport setting that supports positive social experiences within the setting and outside of sport. Feeling a sense of acceptance and group belonging and having opportunities to build and cultivate friendships strengthens continued motivation and participation.



Be encouraging:

Provide different opportunities to grow

Feeling confident about playing and developing new skills instead of how well one performs in competition are key individual factors to fuel motivation and support girls' participation in sport. Explore different ways for the girls to progress.



Be collaborative:

Share ownership

Create a culture where it is natural for the girls to speak up and give feedback and inputs. As a coach you must be willing and able to adapt to the girls wants and needs and involve the girls in defining the activities.

Achieving this may require a different approach from your sport and physical activity workforce. From an organisational point of view, it is important to shape the values and behaviours of those who deliver the programmes and as well as those who influence the culture in which the programmes exist. Only by doing this does real change occur (Sparkes 1990)

In many cases, the person required to deliver these sessions may need to go beyond the 'traditional' core role of what we recognise to be a sports coach or leader. Essentially the role is akin to being a youth worker or social worker and consequently requires a very specific skillset. The skills gaps are not around the technical knowledge of delivering sport. Coaches and volunteers know how to organise sports activities, the gap exists in the social skills required to engage and support girls.

The key role of the organisation is to consider how they support their workforce in this agenda.

What training is available?

What mentoring is provided?

How are sports coaches and leaders supported to enact roles commonly associated with social or youth work?

How is knowledge developed around the core issues such as confidence, self-esteem and body image?

The actions taken around these questions will play a significant role in determining the levels of success you may have around engaging women and girls into sport and physical activity.



Investigating the Impact

Investigating the Impact focuses on how organisations can best evaluate the impact of the work they undertake.

Those of us who work in the sector understand and realise the potential impact that sport can have. This has been recognised by some of the most influential organisations and individuals in the world.

The UN Declaration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development suggests that:

‘Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognize the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect, and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as health, education and social inclusion objectives’

However, claims such as this require evidence and monitoring and evaluation plays a crucial role.

Monitoring is the regular, systematic and routine collection of information from projects and programmes relating to a planned and agreed programme of action.

Evaluation is the process of undertaking a systematic and objective examination of monitoring information in order to answer agreed questions and make judgements of the programme or project.

Although separate entities, monitoring and evaluation is a joined up process that are integral to each other. Monitoring is the process by which you collect on-going information on programmes and interventions whilst Evaluation is the analysis of the monitoring information undertaken to help draw conclusions on the success of programme.



Monitoring and Evaluation should not be an added extra; it should be embedded and integrated to your programme.

Monitoring and evaluation should take into account the participants you are collecting data from; the approach to data collection should be tailored meet participant needs.

Monitoring and evaluation should not be seen as a dull research process; data collection should be fun engaging and informative.

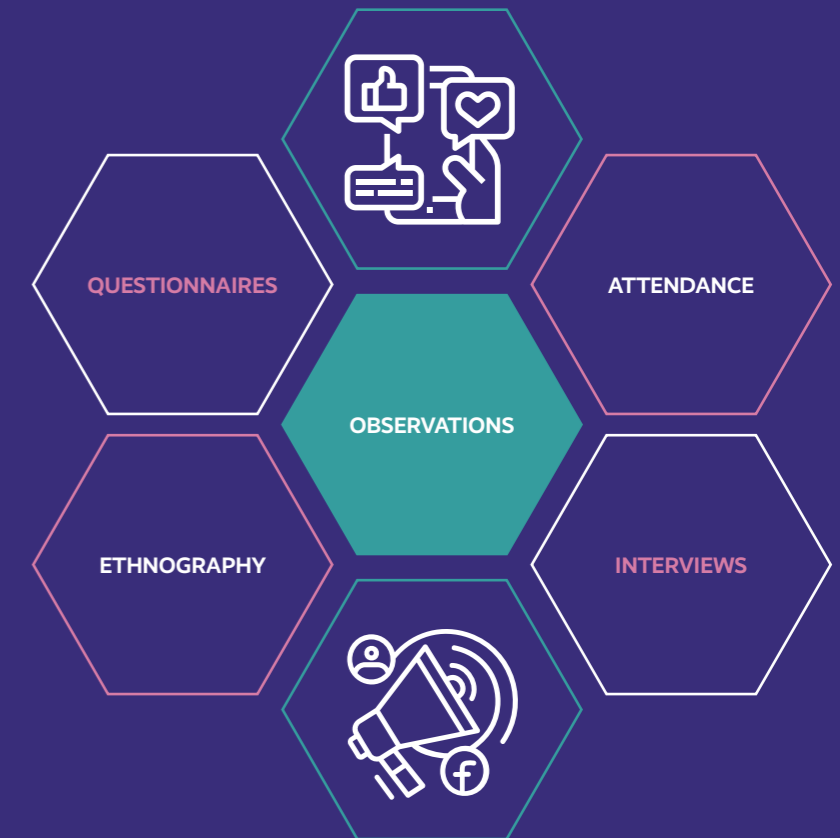
Collecting quality data is essential to ensure the effective undertaking of monitoring and evaluation, a strong evidence base is crucial. In simple terms, there are two types of research.

Qualitative Research is employed in many social science studies. Qualitative research helps the researcher gain understanding of a phenomenon or situation or event. Qualitative methods examine the why and how of decision making, not just what, where, when, or who. This form of research has a strong basis in the field of sociology to understand government and / or social programmes.

Quantitative Research is the systematic investigation of observable phenomena via statistical or numerical techniques. Quantitative methods examines problems relating to what, when, where and who.

As organisations operating in the sport for social impact field, utilising both qualitative and quantitative forms of research will allow you to gain a whole picture of the project or programme that you are leading.

There are many different ways to undertake qualitative and quantitative research. The diagram below provides some guidance.



In 2000, Frchette the UN Deputy Secretary General made the following claim about sport and those who work within it:

‘The power of sports is far more than symbolic. You are engines of economic growth. You are a force for gender equality. You can bring youth and others in from the margins, strengthening the social fabric. You can promote communication and help heal the divisions between peoples, communities and entire nations. You can set an example of fair play.’

These claims can only be justified if the evidence collected through monitoring and evaluation evidence demonstrates actuality. It is up to us as organisations to develop and contribute to this knowledge.

Summary and Conclusion

Our aim within these resources has been to develop your knowledge on a transformative level. The aspiration of 'She Got Game' is to enact system level change with the way sport and physical activity works to engage young women and girls.

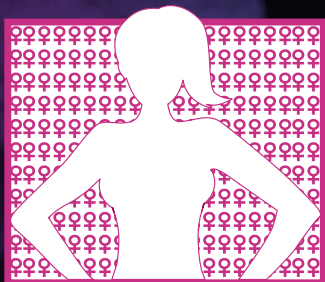
As we stated above, what 'She Got Game' proposes is for your organisation to be intentionally, but supportively, disrupted. It is disruptive on the level of the participant and her significant others (family, peers etc.) and it is disruptive for organisations operating in the sport and physical activity arena.

Ultimately, the status quo will not do. Mind-sets need transforming, behaviours need altering. We need to think differently and act differently, and only once we do will we get the outcome we desire.

We hope you have found the materials throughout this resource useful and informative and that the content has provided you with some insight and knowledge to help you transform the landscape around women and girls participation in sport and physical activity.

Starting a movement requires bravery and takes time; we wish you every success on your journey.





SHE GOT GAME