



FIT FOR LIFE

IN EMERGENCIES

UNESCO
CHAIRS IN
SPORT
& PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY

CONCEPT NOTE



Background

UNESCO's Regional Office in Doha for GCC States and Yemen, Generation Amazing and the UNESCO Chair on Governance and Social Responsibility in Sport at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) are co-organizing the expert meeting: "Fit for Life in Emergencies: UNESCO Chairs in Sport & Physical Activity" at the UN House in Doha, Qatar from 10 to 13 February 2025.

Co-sponsored by the Qatar National Research Fund, the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Qatar, the Generation Amazing Foundation, and the International Center for Sport Security, the event gathers UNESCO Chairs devoted to sport and experts worldwide, in addition to NGOs, foundations, and sport organizations.

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Rationale

Since 2005, Qatar has established itself as a significant player in the global sports arena, hosting 176 high-profile sporting events. As Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sports (CIGEPS), Qatar is committed to using sport as a powerful tool for fostering development and peace in line with its Third Qatar National Development Strategy 2024-2030. The country has invested in both the social and environmental legacy of its major sport events and the promotion of sports for all, aiming to foster empowerment and inclusion. Qatar's vision of sport as a key pillar of the nation aligns with UNESCO's Fit for Life sport initiative, which aims to increase participation and investments in sport to drive social transformations.

In hosting this first expert meeting on Fit for Life in Emergencies, Qatar highlights its leadership in sport for development and peace and showcases the impact of Qatar's efforts and investments in this field, reinforcing its commitment to promoting sport for social change.





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Objectives

It is undeniable: sport transforms lives. It contributes not only to physical and mental well-being, but also to human dignity, social cohesion and inclusion, peacebuilding and to the broader Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sport is a decisive resilience factor for populations living in crisis situations and in vulnerable contexts, including refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and/or persons with disabilities. Moreover, it produces exceptional returns on investment, far exceeding expectations on an individual, collective, national, and international level.

For the first time, UNESCO's Fit for Life flagship programme is focusing on the

transformative power of sport in emergencies through this expert meeting aiming at exploring the multidimensional impact of sport and quality physical education during emergencies, as well as the necessary measures to protect sport ecosystems when they are at risk.

Through scheduled deliberations and based on initiatives that focus on governance, delivery mechanisms, and impact measurement, "Fit for Life in Emergencies" ensures that sport serves as a powerful tool for inclusion, peacebuilding, preparedness, and long-term recovery in emergency contexts.

The objectives of the expert meeting are therefore:



To increase knowledge of and awareness on international impact practices related to sport in emergencies, focusing on life-saving and life-sustaining interventions for children, youth, and families during crises.



To convene UNESCO Chairholders, academic leaders, sport institutions, and international civil society organizations to discuss Qatar's leadership in sport-related emergency initiatives.



To produce a co-authored policy paper (blueprint for action) providing strategic guidance on governance, delivery mechanisms, and impact measurement of sport in emergencies and the protection of sport ecosystems at risk.



To develop a postgraduate elective course to prepare students majoring in sport to respond to emergencies involving sports.



The following three levels will be driving the experts' dialogue:

Governance

This level will explore how the governance of sport and non-sport institutions affects the quality and impact of sport-in-emergencies programs. The expert meeting will provide recommendations for overcoming governance challenges.

Delivery Mechanisms

This level will involve sharing and discussing various delivery mechanisms for sport in emergencies, with an emphasis on authentic engagement through the co-creation, co-design, and co-production of sport interventions.

Capturing Impact

This level will discuss the capacity of sport to generate social change, promote health, and foster inclusion. The expert meeting will consider mixed methods approaches to evaluation, combining qualitative and participatory methods with experimental trials.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the expert meeting include a co-authored "blueprint for action" that addresses the impact of sport and quality physical education in emergencies. This blueprint aims to enhance international research and position Qatar as a leader in sports diplomacy and a strategic humanitarian player.

Additionally, it will place HBKU at the forefront of delivering research-based

policy and advocacy. The blueprint will be disseminated at UNESCO's 2025 Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS) meeting, promoting international dialogue and cooperation.

Finally, the expert meeting will initiate the development of a postgraduate (elective) course designed to prepare students majoring in sport to respond to emergencies involving sports.

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