

THE HBGI OUTCOMES FUND FOR SPORT & MENTAL HEALTH

In collaboration with UNESCO's
Fit for Life initiative

Poor mental health is a shadow pandemic. Without change, by 2030, mental health problems will be the cause of death for more people than cancer, diabetes and respiratory conditions combined. But we know that grassroots sport and physical activity can be a powerful tool to shift community wellbeing and mental health, at scale.

To support more grassroots sport achieve real meaningful impact on the lives of participants, the Healthy Brains Global Initiative is launching the first ever **Outcomes Fund for Sport & Mental Health** working alongside UNESCO and their Fit for Life Sport Initiative.

There is no health without mental health. It is at the heart of our physical and social wellbeing. It is key to happy families and societies, and to prosperous economies. But it is globally deteriorating, with COVID-19 having accelerated that decline dramatically, driving a 25% increase in anxiety and depression around the world. This is particularly acute for youth.

Globally, one in seven 10-19-year-olds experience poor mental health, and one in four people will be affected by a mental illness at some point in their lives. That means an increased risk of self-harm, worse school grades (in the US, only 40% of young people with a mental health condition graduate from high school), and a life struggling in and out of employment. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds.

At the same time, there is a chronic shortage of mental health care professionals and programs nearly everywhere in the world. Without change, by 2030, mental health problems will be the cause of death for more people than cancer, diabetes and respiratory conditions combined.

Sport has the power to transform all of this.



Sport is a high impact, low-cost, culturally adaptable, empowering way to stop the shadow mental health pandemic in its tracks. The evidence on this is unequivocal. Grassroots sports, emphasizing the strengths of everyone, can shift community wellbeing and mental health, at scale.

Sport can deliver a huge social and financial return, building cohesion, bridging differences and reaching the most excluded, disadvantaged communities. It improves educational outcomes. It reduces depression and suicide. It cuts the use of alcohol and drugs. It rescues people from anxiety and trauma. It is youth-friendly but touches all ages, reducing cognitive decline in older people.

How can we make sure that money donated to use sport as an agent of global change actually reaches the lives it is meant to and delivers real, meaningful outcomes for those people? How do we make this a catalytic movement that truly delivers results?

The Healthy Brains Global Initiative is launching the first ever Outcomes Fund for Sport & Mental Health to do just this, working alongside UNESCO and their Fit for Life Sport Initiative.

Who is HBGI?

The Healthy Brains Global Initiative (HBGI) was established with the support of WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank. We are a not-for-profit registered in the United States, with a global team. We are using innovative contracting to create a sea change in the scale and impact of mental health and related services - either contracting and funding directly ourselves or as technical partners with governments. In all cases, we pay for results not waste.

How will the HBGI Outcomes Fund for Sport & Mental Health actually operate?

HBGI will pool the money from a group of donors into a single Outcomes Fund. In collaboration with UNESCO, we will issue a global call for proposals from potential service providers. Following due diligence, selected providers will be contracted to deliver agreed outcomes. The providers will be paid for these outcomes, outcomes which will be very tangible, and 'functional', such as measurable increases in physical and mental wellbeing, as well as young people returning to school, or adults returning to employment or escaping homelessness. All of this will be evidenced. If service providers need working capital to operate before achieving and being paid for these outcomes, then HBGI will bring in social/impact investors to plug the cash gap.

HBGI will look to launch the Outcomes Fund with \$25m and grow this to \$250m of donations over five years.



What is different about this Outcomes Fund?

We only pay for performance and we use commercial drivers to align the incentives of the community, the provider and the donor. We cut out the waste in so many donor or aid-funded services, greatly increasing transparency and accountability. We contract for outcomes and we do not prescribe program content. Providers are therefore able to innovate, creating local, culturally appropriate solutions to keep delivering more outcomes.

Our donors will receive monthly performance updates. This data, on delivery and the results of that delivery, also enables us to track and report to governments on the social return on our investment (SROI) in sport and mental health.

What sort of programs will this be funding?

There are hundreds of traditional and modern sports in the world and a myriad of other possible physical activities. The programs we contract will be as diverse as the communities we reach. They may be entirely new or could be existing programs that donors want to bring under the model.

Examples of programs we could fund



Waves for Change might be one of them.

They train youth mentors who train other young people to surf, alongside a program of personal development.

Their targeted community is youth in South African townships facing extreme daily trauma.

The surf therapy relieves the stress and builds coping strategies with improvements in physical and mental wellbeing.



was
founded in
2002

reached
13m
young people

over
60
countries

Grassroot Soccer (GRS) may be another program we fund. They combine soccer with evidence-based input to address acute health, mental health and social issues.

Laurence Fisher was three-times world karate champion.



She established the charity, Fight for Dignity, which started in Afghanistan and now delivers in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The program uses karate to help female victims of violence to develop coping strategies and resilience.

We will be reaching the homeless in New York, refugees in camps in Ethiopia, children displaced from Ukraine, people at risk of dementia in Rwanda, and girls underperforming in schools in India.

Who are the donors behind this Outcomes Fund?

The first donors to this Outcomes Fund are the owners of the top sports clubs around the world and the world's leading athletes, as well as the businesses sponsoring them. The donors are people who have a passion for sport and who know how it sits at the heart of communities – and who recognize its power as an agent of change. The donors want to be at the forefront of a global shift in our individual and collective mental wellbeing. The donors are also business people, who understand how commercial drivers should be applied to make giving more effective and impactful.

Over time, the success of the Fund and the data it generates will demonstrate to governments the value of them funding these programs themselves. Our partnerships are designed to bring Ministries into the game, to make this a sustainable revolution.

How are HBGI positioning this strategically in the global ecosystem of sport and mental health?

UNESCO has created a global sport alliance called Fit for Life. They aim to use this alliance to systematize international data on the social, educational and health impact of grassroots sport. They will demonstrate how there can be significant cost savings across social, environmental, health and economic domains from even minor investment in 'sport for development'. HBGI will be working in close cooperation with Fit for Life, for promotion and fund raising, definition of metrics, data sharing, capacity development and government engagement.

We also work closely with WHO, particularly WHO AFRO with their sub-Saharan focus. We collaborate with the World Bank and have an active partnership with the McKinsey Health Institute as well as the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).

What's in it for the donors?

We are initially looking for a small number of donors who will see this as a strategic, long-term opportunity. They will utilize it to support the profile of their own brand. It will give them, and their passion for sport as a power for good and for change, a global voice. They will be, and be seen to be, at the spearhead of this global movement.

Donors may also choose to ringfence 25% of their contribution for sport and mental health programs to be contracted in their own local area. Their own grassroots communities will be strengthened, with programs to build social cohesion along with physical and mental wellbeing.