

Us Girls: Engaging Young Women from Disadvantaged Communities in Sport



**An Independent Evaluation by
Brunel University on behalf of
StreetGames**

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents a summary of the findings from research collected during the two years of the Us Girls initiative which was delivered by the Active Women Consortium and led by StreetGames. There were 64+ partners working in 47 areas of disadvantage across England.

1.2 Us Girls was designed to get thirty thousand 16-25 year old young women from disadvantaged communities more active, by providing them with fitness and sport opportunities within their local communities. This included addressing the problem of young women dropping out of sport and helping to increase understanding of the best way to develop programmes for young disadvantaged women. The Us Girls project drew on StreetGames doorstep sport approach to gain understanding of how to deliver sport to young women at the right time, for the right price, to the right place and in the right style.

1.3 The Brunel research focused on gaining knowledge that could be used to evaluate and contribute to the success of the projects. It represents a shift in thinking from focusing on barriers to understanding 'what works'. Therefore most of the data was collected during rather than after the project and was used to inform training and the development of resources for practitioners. The research included interviews and focus groups with project managers, coaches, and participants. This report provides a synthesis of two previous reports: The Active Women Consortium Interim Research Report submitted in March 2012; and the Us Girls Research Report – Participant Experiences submitted in October 2012.

1.4 This report provides a summary of key findings from the research. It begins with an executive summary highlighting key themes from the research. It is followed by an overview of the research findings relating to the following areas: characteristics of the participants, marketing and recruiting strategies, programme planning, programme delivery, motivating participants, sustainability, and management style. An annotated programme planning checklist is included which highlights issues projects may want to consider in light of the findings from the Us Girls research. An overview of methods is also provided. Some of the key literature is referenced throughout the discussion of findings and a brief reference list which highlights some indicative research is included.

1.5 Eleven themes emerged as key factors underpinning the successful outcomes of Us Girls in engaging young women from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in physical activity:

1. Increased Participation
2. Reaching Diverse Participants
3. Engaging Coaches
4. Effective Organisation of Sessions
5. Marketing and Recruiting
6. Incentives and The Us Girls brand
7. Developing Partnerships



8. Variety of Activities
9. Using Evaluation
10. Management Style
11. Sustainability.

1.6 Themes from the Us Girls Research

1.6.1 Increased Participation

The Us Girls initiative successfully reached its target of engaging 30,000 young women in sporting activities. Traditionally, this age group has evidenced low rates of participation in sport and gaining understanding of how best to address the problem was a key challenge for the Us Girls staff. One of the key successes of the initiative was its capacity to address the needs of women who had little confidence in their sporting abilities and who were anxious about getting involved in sport.

1.6.2 Reaching diverse participants

The 16-25 year old age group represents a diverse group of women with varying responsibilities, commitments, experiences, and interests. Project managers found that they had most success when they were able to match delivery to the needs of specific target groups such as students, young mums, women in full time employment, Muslim women, and NEETs. Women also varied in terms of their sports experience, confidence, and preferred activities. Consultation with participants prior to and during the projects helped managers establish the ideal time, place, style, cost, and activity for the women in their communities. There were also commonalities among many participants particularly in relation to preferred coaching style and organisation of sessions.

1.6.3 Engaging Coaches

Coaches played a crucial role in the success of Us Girls and many participants highlighted the coach as a key factor in their enjoyment, motivation, and attendance. Desired qualities in a coach included: friendly, sense of humour, inspirational, and motivating. Many participants identified that they preferred a democratic, participatory style of coaching that allowed for them to have a say in the sessions.

1.6.4 Effective organisation of sessions

Us Girls sessions were characterised by a relaxed atmosphere that allowed women to have fun, be social, and engage in high levels of activity in a non-judgmental environment. Women enjoyed learning new skills, and physically challenging themselves without being formally directed or taught. Women enjoyed the capacity to work at their own pace in emotionally safe and encouraging environments without feeling embarrassed. In particular, women did not want to worry about their appearance or their skill level. Many of the women identified a preference for women-only sessions stating that they felt more comfortable in this environment.

1.6.5 Marketing and Recruiting

Us Girls used a range of marketing strategies to attract young women to their programmes including flyers, local newspapers, and social media. Many projects found that taster sessions,

festivals, open days, and visits to intact groups which provided potential participants with an idea of what sessions might be like worked well. Marketing materials using the strapline fun, friends and fitness and images of 'normal' women were effective for recruiting as well.

1.6.6 Incentives and The Us Girls brand

Incentives were used effectively by Us Girls projects. Us Girls developed a range of merchandise that could be used as incentives including water bottles, bags, watches, sweatshirts and t-shirts. These were handed out during taster sessions and festivals to help with recruiting. They were also used within sessions to reward participants for attendance. Free sessions were also used to encourage young women to attend initially. Bring a friend incentives were popular and used to encourage women to bring other people.

1.6.7 Developing Partnerships

Many of the project managers found that partnership work was helpful for increasing participation, attracting new participants, and enhancing resources. Partners could provide access to participants, use of facilities and equipment, and local knowledge of community needs and interests. Working with intact groups such as colleges, community groups, or places of work were found to be effective for recruiting participants to activity sessions.

1.6.8 Variety of Activities

Us Girls participants engaged in a range of activities from competitive team sports to individual exercise-based sessions such as Zumba. About half of the activities were exercised-based with women enjoying the social dynamics as well as the physical challenge of getting fit. Multi-sport sessions were also very popular and participants enjoyed the chance to try different sports. Some Us Girls participants expressed a preference for having fun, variety, and the social rewards of playing on a team without necessarily wanting to train for a particular sport.

1.6.9 Evaluation

The Us Girls initiative used a range of evaluation methods including statistics, surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The focus of the evaluation was to learn what works in order to contribute to the overall success of the initiative. This was achieved by using process evaluation that generated findings during the early stages of the Us Girls initiative that could be used to help develop resources and training materials that could be used by the projects to enhance their delivery.

1.6.10 Management style

The Us Girls management team adopted a supportive and flexible approach to overseeing the Us Girls initiative. They provided advice, training, and problem-solving skills to help programmes to achieve their goals. Particular strategies that helped groups included regional meetings, having a London-based manager, national conferences, training workshops, on-line and hard copy resources including how-to guides, visits, and accessible telephone-based support. Project coordinators also felt positive about the Us Girls style of management which enabled them to deal openly with problems, make changes to programmes, participate in decision-making, and input into policies and practices.

1.6.11 Sustainability

The Us Girls initiative has been a success and the programme will continue as part of StreetGames portfolio of services. The creation of a website with resources, a 3 hour training workshop which has been delivered at national and regional events, reports, and presentations will continue to inform planning and delivery. Individual projects have been able to build on the success of their activities to continue delivering programmes to girls and women using the Us Girls brand.



2. Who was involved in Us Girls?

2.1 Us Girls participants represented a diverse multi-ethnic population living in different geographic locations throughout England. Women who are aged 16-25 have been identified as a transitional period for young.ⁱ Us Girls participants included: young mums, students, women in work, school leavers, unemployed women, NEETS, at-risk women, and Muslim women. Women aged 16-25 have been shown to have low levels of physical activity participation and this has been shown to relate to a range of personal, social and environmental factors, including the impact of transition, employment, sport experience, income, motherhood, and confidence.^{ii iii iv}

2.2 There was no single approach to delivering activities that appeared to meet the needs and interests of all 16-25 year old young women. Project managers and coaches needed to consider the target population carefully when planning programmes. For example, young, working mums may have different needs, interests, attitudes and commitment than students, unemployed women or NEETs.

2.3 One of the keys to the success of programmes was the ability of coordinators to adjust to the needs and interests of different subgroups within the broader population of 16-25 year old women. For example, the best time to offer an activity could be linked to whether a young woman was in college, full-time work, motherhood, or unemployed. Some women were more experienced than others and some groups set up activities for beginners as well as more experienced participants.

Who makes up the Us Girls target group?

- Young mums
- Students
- Women in work
- School leavers
- Unemployed women
- NEETs
- At risk women
- Muslim women



3. What works: Marketing and recruiting

3.1 Recruiting participants was a challenge for all projects and a wide range of marketing strategies were employed in order to reach as many women as possible. The Us Girls team developed templates for marketing based on their logo and strapline that could be used and adapted. Stakeholders were positive about the Us Girls strapline: *'Fun, fitness, friends: Get-together with the Girls'* as it was deemed to convey that this sport experience was welcoming, social, and friendly and it signaled an approach to activity that differentiated it from more traditional sport and PE environments which may not appeal to some women. Resources were available on-line and were further developed in training sessions and presentations at regional and national meetings.^v



Marketing strategies

- ✓ flyers
- ✓ community groups
- ✓ word of mouth
- ✓ local newspaper
- ✓ information booths at community events
- ✓ taster sessions
- ✓ local radio shows
- ✓ existing clubs and organisations
- ✓ schools and colleges
- ✓ social media
- ✓ banner in front of the centre
- ✓ telephone and email

3.2 Some women from the target groups were apprehensive about attending a sport session and, for this population, marketing and recruitment strategies that were able to alleviate their concerns were deemed particularly useful.

*"I was really worried because I didn't know whether I would be able to do it.
(StreetDance)*



The posters made it really clear that it was like fun, fitness and friends ... (Multisport focus group)



3.3 Going with friends and family, friendly recruiting strategies, experience of other activity settings, or prior knowledge of the leader or activity were identified as helping women get involved initially. Women were concerned about not being good enough, appearance, and fitting in socially.

3.4 One of the key findings in relation to marketing and recruiting was the belief that the most effective marketing tools provided young women with a chance to learn what the environment would be like prior to attending a session. This could be learning about the programme from friends and family, having a chance to meet the coach, having the activity in a pre-established group setting, or participating in a taster session. The personal touch may be particularly important for young women who have had negative experiences of sport in the past.

3.5 Word of mouth was found to be the most effective strategy for recruiting young women. Typically, young women learned about the programme from a friend or relative.

I think I was quite happy because my friend recommended it, so that was ... I mean if it was somewhere new that we'd both never been before, ... I wouldn't want to go. But I think it was because it was recommended. (Multi-sport focus group)

It's like anything for the first time, you have anxiety, apprehension about something, and then when you're actually there and you're doing it, you think "oh what was I worried about in the first place?" (Cycling focus group)

3.6 Many groups encouraged women to bring a friend and offered incentives for both the friend and the woman who brought them.

We also do bring a friend and then you can come for free. So if someone comes and brings a friend that hasn't been before, they get the session free, and that's just our way of trying to encourage people to bring more people and build up numbers. (Us Girls coordinator)

3.7 Support from coaches could also be helpful for recruiting. Some coaches conducted taster sessions, visited intact groups, and went to workplaces and colleges to make a personal connection with potential participants and discuss potential sessions.

The e-mail I got from the coach was so sweet, so nice, so encouraging, you know ... so that was really helpful. (Bootcamp focus group)

3.8 A number of project managers developed partnerships with intact groups and organizations in order to recruit participants. This could be to gain insight into the interests of local communities:

The community centres did an initial sort of consultation process with their users of what activities they wanted, why they wanted it, had they done these activities before. So, they came back to us with the activities that they wanted...we got a vast amount of activities wanting to be done: boxer fit, netball, dance...Zumba... we just looked at what they came back with and what we could offer, then went back to the community centre and said look, out of these sports/activities this is what we can offer. (Project Manager)

3.9 Partners were also used to help hard to reach recruit participants using people whom they already knew and trusted:

We took some existing relationships that we had with either Childrens Centre's or Community Centres, Sport Centres or sports clubs, we took existing relationships and we sort of expanded on it further. So rather than just say yes, we're working alongside you to deliver an activity in your venue". It was, "right, you know all of 'the females that access your facilities, you send them the poster'. So, rather than us sending the poster out saying come to our session, if it came to them directly then a bit more trust and a bit

more knowledge associated with what they can provide. So, it's a bit more heavily relying on those partnerships. (Project Manager)

3.10 Us Girls projects employed a range of marketing and recruiting strategies in order to reach their target group. Many of these involved re-assuring women about the friendly and fun elements of sessions as well as the opportunity to get fit.ⁱ

4. What works: Programme Planning

4.1 Right Time

4.1.1 There was no one 'best' time to deliver activities. Project managers used a number of strategies to deliver activities at the 'right time' for particular groups.

A lot of the stuff goes on for people during the day. So for people like me who work full time...I don't get the benefit of it so [it's good] when something is on at night... (Zumba)

The swimming has worked very well with the groups on a Saturday, and I think they've done that one with a lot of the Somalia women. They have a session with their children just before our session, and then they stay for the ladies only session.

4.1.2 In order to meet the needs of different groups, organisers planned multiple sessions, consulted with participants, and changed times that did not seem to work.

[we have activities] lunchtime, Saturdays, evenings sort of 7:30, and then we've sort of got mid-afternoon, sort of 5:00.

4.1.3 This project manager added that there was no one time that worked better, 'it's more tailored to the community'. Consistency helped coaches to build and maintain groups.

I think it's the regularity of keeping a Wednesday night session, there's always, always been a Wednesday night session. (Project manager)

4.1.4 The right time was deemed to be a time that was convenient and fit with participants' other commitments. Project managers consulted and adjusted times and days to the needs of their target populations.

4.2 Right Cost

4.2.1 Many women had limited funds for leisure activities and low or no cost sessions attracted participants to Us Girls programmes. Initial free sessions, incentive schemes, and opportunities to 'win' free sessions helped to increase participation and build commitment.

I first started Zumba and then a girl in this class gave me a poster [about] basketball...so I started going to that as well. Because it's free and I am a cheapskate basically....the Zumba classes are normally about in the region of £10.

4.2.2 Many projects successfully introduced small fees in order to build sustainability into their programmes. Some project managers felt that this helped provide value to the session. The programmes we observed ranged in cost from free to one multi-sport session that was £3.00. The participants in each case were partly drawn to the activities because of their low cost and the initial free sessions were often cited as an initial motivation to try the activity.

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I started coming here like six weeks ago maybe. And it's been really good, I just, I would have come sooner if I'd worked out that I could play basketball for free!
(Basketball focus group)

4.2.3 Participants compared the low cost of Us Girls activities to similar sessions in the community which were typically more expensive. Getting a 'deal' was appealing, but also practical as a number of women did not have sufficient disposable income for more expensive options like gym memberships or classes. One Zumba class had a particularly committed group of women who lived on a local estate. They had membership cards which were signed off weekly and Us Girls merchandise was used as an incentive for regular attendance. In the focus group they discussed the cost and the membership in detail.

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The price is brilliant as well, it's just £1 a week! (Zumba Participant)

... yeah, and we were quite reluctant to bring in a membership thing but then we realised actually, I mean it is good because it makes people quite committed (agreement).
(Zumba coach)

For these participants £1 was fine but £3 a bit high, particularly if they had to pay for children as well.

- *£1's OK, no problem, but £3 is a bit ...*
- *...when I'm paying for Amy as well, that's £5, if Maria puts her two girls in, there's an extra £2, £7 just for one night. (Zumba focus group)*

4.2.4 Project coordinators felt that fees could contribute to making a programme sustainable and to increasing participants' commitments; however, they were also determined to ensure that cost was not a barrier for women living in socially disadvantaged communities.

So it's not really about making money but it will help to sustain the session further. But we do want to keep it obviously affordable so that money's not a barrier for people. (Us Girls Project Manager/Coach)

4.3 Right Place

4.3.1 For many of the women the location of the activity formed a crucial determinant of participation. This is partly because activity sessions need to fit in with other demands on time.

Sessions targeted at particular neighbourhoods, communities or schools worked well for participants who lived in those areas.

I think it's cool that, because the fact that it's free and the fact that I live literally down the road, so I can just pop along and then have fun and do different sports as well. (Multi-sport focus group)

The trade-off can be less ability to expand numbers to individuals who live outside of the area. For example, one Zumba session was held in a community centre located within an estate which was distant from other residential areas. This meant that it only attracted women from that particular estate.

4.3.2 While having a local facility was crucial for attendance for the majority of women there were occasions when women were willing to travel. This was particularly true if the session or facility was unique such as a dance recital or an off road space for cycling

The only reason I don't come sometimes is because I don't drive yet, so I have to rely on like my brother to bring me sometimes, which is a bit annoying, because a lot of times I really wanted to come but just not been able to get here. (Multi-sport focus group)

Yeah we live quite far, because it's like about an hour's journey from here..but it's not that bad. (Cycling focus group)

For most participants, having sessions in convenient, accessible locations helped to address barriers such as transport and time and enhanced their capacity to attend regularly.

4.4 Right Activities

4.4.1 During the research we interviewed participants involved in a wide range of programmes including: Zumba, boot camp, basketball, cycling, multi-sport, badminton, canoeing, and StreetDance. It was clear that participants did not all share a desire for one particular activity. Some women preferred team sports and others wanted more individual, exercise-based activities. Some activities were perceived as more appealing to different age groups re-emphasizing the diversity of the 16-25 year old age range. Younger women were more likely to participate in StreetDance but other activities were quite varied in terms of their appeal. A number of participants were involved in more than one type of activity and enjoyed different sport and fitness experiences.

Well I've been a member of a gym before, and sometimes I like working out alone but then sometimes you need interaction...It's just different, lots of different activities, so you don't really get bored, it's fun. (Festival, multi-sport)

4.4.2 A number of participants stated that they enjoyed experiencing a variety of sports and activities rather than focusing on a particular sport. Multi-sports proved popular and women stated that they enjoyed trying new activities.

When it comes to this multi sports it's good to get away from the netball and then do the tag rugby and something different, and the volleyball you know. That's what I enjoyed, the difference ... (Multi-sport focus group)

- *Sometimes we'll turn up and they'll say oh do you want to pick what you're doing in the second half and if we've something, like the other week we played a game of [seated] volleyball ...*
- *Because we'd seen it at the Paralympics, we was rubbish at it but we had a go and it ... (Multi-sport focus group).*

Bootcamp participants also identified variety as motivating:

- *Yeah I like it because it's a bit like, I like circuit stuff and that ...*
- *It's not just the same thing all the time.*
- *She changes stations? (interviewer)*
- *Yeah it's different every week, yeah.*
- *You don't get bored. (Bootcamp focus group)*

4.4.3 One of the positive elements of new activities is that everyone is a beginner. This can alleviate differences in ability and foster a more participatory experience.

It's quite good as well, like the new sports, like netball most people played at school I think, but the new sports, everyone's starting off at the beginner's level, so like not many people have played volleyball before, so everyone was like a beginner ... (Multi-sport focus group)

4.4.4 In addition, multi-sport sessions were viewed as a good way to try new things which would be more difficult without the support of the group and access to facilities and equipment.

Because as well, so if you're away from here, if you wanted to start a new sport you'd have to buy all the equipment and things, but here it was sort of kind of for free really! (Multi-sport focus group)

4.4.5 Whilst variety was appreciated by a number of women, some of the younger women we spoke to were committed to particular activities such as Streetdance or basketball and wanted to focus on improving their skill and working towards playing and performing to a high standard. Offering multiple activities can be challenging for coaches as they need to access a range of equipment but can prove motivating to women who want to have fun and get fit but are less interested in specialising in a particular sport.



5. What Works: Programme Delivery

5.1 The Us Girls Coaches

5.1.1 According to project managers and participants, the coach is key to Us Girls successes.

I'd say our main thing is the skill of the staff we've got on board....it's their ability to engage with young people. Yeah, so it's the quality of the relationships, their skills in developing quality relationships. (Project Manager)

We chose friendly and approachable staff, but they also have to be suitably qualified. (Project Manager)

I think it's all about the coach, I'll be honest, and the person running it that makes you feel comfortable. (Multi-Sport focus group)

5.1.2 Coaches are involved in recruiting, in keeping in touch with participants to insure attendance, and in creating an enjoyable and welcoming environment that will encourage and motivate young women. Participants appreciated coaches who were friendly, encouraging, motivating and non-judgmental. In addition, the coaches were noted for creating a positive atmosphere where participants could be social, and have fun. The ideal coach, therefore, evidenced a balance of qualities that made sessions fun, motivating, social and active. Women participating in a bootcamp focus group explained the 'right' characteristics for an Us Girls coach.

- *She does tell you off if you stop as well!*
- *I like that.*
- *She's encouraging as well.*
- *Yeah, like ...Motivation.*
- *And she's quite fun as well, she's dead like ...*
- *Yeah you can have a laugh ...*
- *But then when you do stop she does tell, she does tell you ...*
- *But if you are slacking, she will say come on, get back on it.*
- *Yeah, she's very encouraging.*
- *... which is good, yeah.(Bootcamp focus group)*

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The friendly staff, they're really nice and they joke with us and stuff.

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Similarly a group of young women in college explained what they appreciated about their instructor.

She's clear, makes sure that you 'get' it. (Zumba focus group)

She's nice, not critical, teaches you how to do it, breaks it down and repeats, she also makes mistakes. (Zumba focus group)

Women wanted coaches to provide good technical instruction and contingent positive feedback, and to develop warm interpersonal relationships with them.^{vii} Many women stated that they did not wish to be ‘taught’ in a formal sense.

5.2 Relaxed, Safe Atmosphere

5.2.1 The participants in the research identified that they wanted to feel that the coaches and other participants were nonjudgmental about appearance and ability. Therefore, creating a space where women did not feel embarrassed about the appearance or their ability was an important consideration.

5.2.2 Women that we interviewed enjoyed feeling relaxed about their ability and appreciated the more low key approach adopted by the coaches and other participants.

Yeah, you can do as much or as little of it as you like and there’s no, you know no one looks at you as if to say, no you’re not doing it, you know. So it’s easier that way ... (Zumba focus group)

‘no rules’, if you do it wrong it’s ok, no shouting at you, no one is watching you. You get sweaty, you get your stress out, no one stares. Do it for self, doesn’t matter if you go wrong... (Zumba focus group)

5.2.3 Similarly, women did not want to worry about their appearance and Us Girls participants contrasted the relaxed environment of sessions with other environments found in fitness centres and aerobics that were seen to be more exclusive in relation to appearance and clothing.

... and you don’t know whether you’re going to get loads of like gym bunnies, they’ll be in like Lycra and everything! You know and all that! (all laugh) And you’re just thinking, I’ve just come in my leggings and an old shirt ...(Bootcamp focus group)

You know all shapes and sizes, you know, they come at first and they’re like [worried], don’t worry, look, we’re all here to have fun. (Multi-sport focus group)

5.2.4 A number of Muslim women participants also identified that being able to participate in appropriate clothing was important.

That’s the main thing, that you can wear your Muslim dress and it doesn’t really matter, it doesn’t make any difference. ...Because they’d be like oh you can’t wear something that’s quite long, or you can’t wear a skirt and ride a bike, or you know those kind of comments. And I found that here it doesn’t matter about what I wear and I can still ride. And I think that sort of boosted my confidence as well, that people weren’t putting restrictions that didn’t exist. (Cycling focus group)

5.2.5 The need for emotional as well as physical safety in sporting environments, particularly for less experienced or confident women, has been shown to facilitate ongoing participation.^{viii ix x} The Us Girls coaches and participants seemed to work together to create a nonjudgmental environment that minimised concerns about appearance and ability or experience. Some PE and fitness environments that women have experienced were linked to negative emotions relating to making mistakes, concerns about body type and clothing and this may be an important consideration for training coaches who will be working with similar populations.

5.2.6 For some women, women only sessions are desirable. While this may be particularly true for some women due to their religious beliefs, most of the women involved in Us Girls said that they were more comfortable with women only sessions. Almost all the sessions we visited were led by women and all of the participants were female as well, although we did observe a male coach delivering a popular badminton session. We only observed one example of mixed gender participation where girls sometimes played basketball with boys due to small numbers.

5.2.7 For some Muslim women having a female only space is ‘very important’:

You feel more comfortable to run around, and like sometimes when it’s hot we can take our hijabs off. So like when there’s men there you feel uncomfortable running and doing things, activities, you wouldn’t be open as we are now because it’s only women, so we feel more comfortable. (Festival part of multi-sport)

Overall, the ability to participate in sports with other women was perceived as providing a more comfortable, friendly and relaxed environment than mixed sessions and participants identified this as one of the characteristics of Us Girls that they valued in particular.

5. 3 Competition

5.3.1 Some women enjoyed some competition within sessions. Competitions could generate excitement, challenge and fun. There was an emphasis on ensuring that competitions were inclusive and enjoyable for women of different abilities. We observed a netball match where players rotated positions and a badminton session where rules were modified in order to keep activity high and everyone involved.

It’s never competitive, so even though we’re a bit competitive aren’t we?! (ALL LAUGH) But it is just dead laid back, a good laugh, and that’s what all the sessions are like. And if anyone wants anything more competitive, we can signpost them to teams, into clubs, and that’s great if people go to clubs but a lot of the people who come to the sessions just want to stay at this level don’t they? (Multi-sport focus group)

5.3.2 One Olympic style sports festival was designed to encourage women to compete against each other in a range of ‘events’.

I would say that, like today’s session, it was, I felt like all of us were taking part, everyone was, there was no one like out of the group and ... (Festival focus group)

5.3.3 A number of women stated that they enjoyed a level of competition. A group of young women who attended a basketball class stated that they enjoyed competition and were hoping to join a league. Other groups stated that they enjoyed competitive elements to sessions but only up to a point.

I think Zumba you can do anywhere, like there's a lot of Zumba classes and things like that. I'd rather play a competitive game ... (basketball focus group)

It's not competitive in a sense that if you do something wrong you get shouted out ... (Multi-sport focus group)

5.3.4 Many of the women stated that they enjoyed competition at some level; however, they did not want to feel judged and wanted to maintain high levels of fun, inclusion and enjoyment.^{xi} Events such as Race for Life and 5K runs were popular amongst Us Girls project participants where they were able to train together and set personal and group targets.

6. Motivating Participants

6.1 Challenge

6.1.1 Many women stated that they enjoyed the challenge of the Us Girls sports sessions. It was clear that the social, relaxed, flexible environment that women identified as desirable did not mean that they did not value physical challenges. Sweating and hard work were perceived as desirable elements of physical activities.

You sweat and you feel as though you've done [something], yeah ... (Bootcamp focus group)

-It's quite challenging as well because like you push yourself more like if you go like on longer rides.

-Yeah, and your legs ache! (Cycling focus group)

6.1.2 Other challenges could be getting better at activities, learning new skills, and trying new activities.

This time was like challenging that you have to do and you can have a go, and there was a timing, like you have to push yourself to do things and to win something. (Festival focus group).

What I'm really impressed about this [coach] ... is most of the time they are actually coaching you really well! (agreement) So other people I've had before haven't been as like, you know intensely kind of bringing you up, getting you to play well, play well as a team and work together and everything (agreement). So it's really nice to have that. (Basketball focus group)

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It gives you that support doesn't it? You have that, you feel like you're not on your own, that everyone's in the same boat and everyone wants you to become better at it. (Cycling focus group)

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I think the social side is really important, I know with the confident riders' group we kind of like add another half hour on to our ride just because we want to stop somewhere and have a coffee and a natter.... We have quite a few teenagers that come, just purely so that they can meet their friends, you know, and it's lovely, and everybody does that ... (Cycling focus group)

I would say that, like today's session, it was, I felt like all of us were taking part, everyone was, there was no one like out of the group and ... Even people I've never met before(!) like you spoke and it was quite nice. (Festival focus group)

6.2.2 Others suggested that they felt that being part of a class and getting to know other people made them feel more motivated to attend. One group of girls learned about a multi-sport class at work.

-Yeah I think like at work we're all, are you going tonight, yeah alright, so then you go --- because you know ... -If you don't you're going to get hassled! (all laugh) (Multi-sport focus group)

6.2.3 Sessions often began with women catching up and chatting and this social element contributed to the fun and friendly element of the sessions. Women suggested that knowing other women in the session helped motivate them to attend and made the sessions more enjoyable.^{xii} They also enjoyed having fun, social time for themselves. Women, particularly women with children, often find making time for themselves challenging and the convenience and fun of Us Girls combined social time with a workout.^{xiii}

6.3 Health and fitness

6.3.1 Enhancing health and fitness is a central focus of the Us Girls programmes. Many women identified health and fitness as key reason for attending sport sessions and felt that they had experienced positive changes as a result.

Health wise, obviously that's probably the main thing that you're active and then it probably brings your fitness up. We all came last week, we hadn't been in ages and it was like an hour of basketball and we were huffing and puffing during the drills! ...So I think probably just like you get fitness from running around for an hour, you're more

active, and rather than going to the gym and you're working one particular muscle set, you're doing something you're literally moving every muscle in your body kind of thing. (Multi-sport, festival)

I think cycling is especially important as a sport, as a fitness I think it's very good, it's good for the muscles and all that, keeps you fit. (Cycling focus group)

Fitness, it makes me feel better after I've been here (agreement) I feel like a slob if I've not done anything (agreement). I got into that routine of after being, leaving school of just feeling horrible and just feeling lazy, and coming here, I feel better after it, I do it a couple of times a week and then I can maybe force myself to go to the gym once, then I've done my three days ... (Multi-sport focus group)

Fitness sessions were also identified as helping with injuries or other physical problems.

The stretching with Zumba's helped with my, I get tendonitis in my shoulder, and that's really helped to stretch it out and it's really done some good, so ... (Zumba focus group)

6.3.2 Women's feeling that their health and fitness were improving indicates that the Us Girls project made the connection between activity and improved health. Participants discussed general improvements in feelings of well-being, increased flexibility, and muscular development.

6.4 Mental Benefits

6.4.1 In addition to physical health, a number of women felt that participation in Us Girls sessions yielded mental benefits. A number of women identified stress reduction as a benefit. For some women part of the appeal was having a break and getting out of the house to do something different with other women.



*Mentally, it's brilliant isn't it?
It's the stress of all day and then you just have a bit of fun. It's just a laugh isn't it? So like you say it's a de-stress (Zumba focus group)*



- *It clears your mind I think, exercise ...*
- *It makes you feel better about yourself ...*
- *Yeah, you always feel loads better don't you, after you've done it. (Bootcamp focus group)*

Especially as it gets to winter, you sort of sit down and you think I can't be bothered coming but I'm really glad that I do come because afterwards I feel better. And then I think what would I have been doing if I hadn't come here, I'd just been watching telly or something, so ... (Multi-sport focus group)

It's exercising as well but it gives you freedom, you feel like you're a free soul when you're on bike. And it doesn't ...really make you feel tired like when you exercise in the gym, it's not like that, so you are outdoor, you know fresh air, and I see lots of people

doing other things, and it makes you happy, yeah. I think for mental health it's a must that people do ride a bike, it really does help. (Cycling focus group)

6.4.2 These comments suggest that women are not only enjoying their activities, they are also finding that physical activity contexts can reduce stress rather than be stressful. This is a strong indicator of a key positive outcome of being involved in activity. The mental benefits also extended to feeling more positive about the self as well as more general feelings of well-being.^{xiv}

6.5 Weight

6.5.1 A number of women said that losing weight was the key motivation for coming to sessions as well as a benefit of attending.

Definitely losing weight, I mean I've lost loads from doing the Zumba and everything, from when I first started, I've lost about 2 ½ stone altogether. So it's definitely working for me, yeah. (Zumba focus group)

Well weight for me, it is weight. (Multi-sport focus group)

But typically, it was not just weight:

And the laugh as well. (Zumba focus group)

I mean I've lost loads from doing the Zumba and everything, (Zumba focus group)

6.5.2 Some women stated that they had lost weight. They also added that losing weight was not, by itself, sufficient motivation and that the enjoyable atmosphere of sessions was crucial to sustaining participation.

6.6 Learning new skills

6.6.1 A few women stated that they enjoyed learning new skills. These comments were more likely to emerge in single-sport focus groups such as basketball, streetdance, and cycling. Some women in a cycling group learned how to ride a bike for the first time in their lives. They discussed how this gave them confidence to try other activities.

-I think it's not just being confident riding but it also gives you that confidence to do other things as well (agreement). You know when you feel like you can't do it but then - once you know how to do something then you ...

- Yeah, then you feel like you can do other things. (Cycling focus group)

-I learnt so much!

-Yeah it's good, especially for beginners it's good because you just get the feel of how a real game is. So it's fun, even though we didn't win that much games. (Basketball focus group)

6.6.2 In youth sport contexts learning new skills is often a priority for young people. The women in this study also identified that they enjoyed learning skills and gaining in confidence in their abilities.

6.6.3 In addition, two young women involved in Street Dance explained that they enjoyed learning new dance moves and routines and felt good about their abilities. For a number of young women the Us Girls activities are allowing them to become more accomplished in their chosen sport. For other women, learning a new skill like riding a bike was seen to impact their self-confidence beyond sport.

6.6.4 It appears that for some the Us Girls experience may lead to sustained participation in sport or help provide the confidence to try other new activities. Part of building confidence is developing skills and knowledge which in turn has been identified as a key precursor to future levels of activity.

7. Sustainability

7.1 The participants we talked to enjoyed the programmes and stated that they hoped to continue being active. The Us Girls brand and resources will continue to be used and many of the projects have found ways to continue delivering Us Girls branded activities to young women. These include securing funding from other sources, mainstreaming activity with NGB programmes (eg No Strings Badminton or Back2Netball), introducing a small charge to cover costs and upskilling volunteers to continue delivery of the project.

7.2 One of the challenges to sustainability is the nature of attendance and group size at the Us Girls projects. A successful Us Girls project may seem relatively small in size compared to club sports and youth leagues. For example, one bootcamp session that we attended attracted 8 participants; however, usually about 10-15 turned up. These numbers were viewed as a 'nice size' (Bootcamp focus group). In addition, attendance can be unpredictable meaning that managers cannot rely on a set amount of income each week. The key challenges for young women were time, child care, other commitments, and their own inability to get themselves moving. As one coach stated:

These ladies are very hard to get active, you know, they'll turn up one week, you know you'll have 20, and then the next week you'll have one. And so some organisations, they see that and go oh we're not succeeding. But sometimes the way of marketing and approaching ladies is, it's very time consuming. I think we spend a lot of time calling, we practically call everyone on a weekly basis, or e-mail them on a weekly basis so they don't disappear. (Multi-sport coach)

7.3 One multi-sport group was viewed as successful in part because it ran no matter how many people turned up.

It's good here because you can adapt, like there was quite a few tonight, but if there's only two turn up you can still play badminton or something like that. You know that

when you turn up you're going to, there's going to be something on, you're not going to be turned away because there's only 2 or 3. Whereas if it was like a netball session or something like that, they would say there's no point staying ... (Multi-sport focus group)

7.4 These experiences were replicated in other settings we visited and suggest that programmes need to be able to run with some flexibility in numbers per session, or find ways to recruit larger numbers.

It can be demoralising for staff when there just isn't take up by young people, you know, if we planned quite a good sports session. (Project manager)

7.5 Even women who enjoy going to sessions may find it difficult to get themselves there. This could be very challenging for staff who worked hard to develop a quality programme.

It can be demoralising for staff when there just isn't take up by young people, you know, if we planned quite a good sports session. But the quality and professionalism of the staff involved means that they don't let that spill over into showing disappointment to the young people. (Project manager)

7.6 Some of the women discussed factors that impacted their attendance such as time, family and religious commitments, and inertia.

It's getting here...Once you've actually done it you feel great for it. (Bootcamp focus group)

Time, because I'm studying at the moment, sixth form, so I have to go to school obviously, then do some revision and then when I get here I'm tired, or the timing's a bit wrong or I'm just, yeah ... But the location's alright, I live quite close to here. (Festival, multi-sport focus group)

[We attend] off and on! Like we came twice, that's about it. But after the Ramadan period we'd like to come more regularly, yeah. Festival, multi-sport focus group)

It's free, so that's not a thing either. So I walk, that's my warm up, when I walk over! So no, there's no real obstacles to coming here, not really, no. And the other times I think it's just me! Just wanting a lie in in the morning, probably one or two lie ins that sort of thing. (Multi-sport focus group)

These barriers are well documented in previous research and reinforce the complex factors that influence decisions to participate in physical activity.^{vii}

7.6 In addition, this cohort of women was also susceptible to life changes around leaving school or University, getting jobs, having children and other factors. These changes also lead to changes in participation levels.

I'm going to struggle to come when I start my new job in September.

Transition and stages of the lifecycle have been shown to impact women's ability to devote time to physical activity. Creating flexible environments that are motivating continues to be a challenge for delivering sport to women.

7.7 The challenges to consistent attendance have ramifications for coaches seeking funding to deliver programmes.

You have to, I mean it's quite labour intensive actually. And I think that's, I mean when we apply for funding, we always get stuck, because we always ask for more money than other organizations ask for, you know our numbers are smaller, but we have to, what we sort of try to get across is actually it's the quality of the people that we're getting rather than quantity. So we're literally getting inactive people active, literally. (Programme coordinator)

7.8 Attendance continued to be a challenge for project managers and coaches. Strategies for creating programmes that meet the demands of young women with many commitment, responsibilities, and motivate them to get out the door were discussed in the previous sessions. Project managers did find that even well-designed and delivered sessions could struggle to maintain consistent numbers on a weekly basis.

7.9 Whilst the official funding period for Us Girls ended on 31st March 2013, the programme will continue and is being assimilated into the mainstream delivery of StreetGames core business continuing to use the Us Girls brand to engage young women and girls in sport & physical activity. The growing programme is now actively involved with over 100 delivery organisations including voluntary organisations, local authorities, leisure trusts, colleges and professional sports clubs. The number of projects involved in the Us Girls network has doubled since the start of the programme. Us Girls also works with and supports a range of national partners including NGBs.

7.10 Us Girls have produced a number of tools and resources aimed to help projects and partners to increase and retain young women in sport. These include:

- A series of 14 practical 'How To' Guides to help project managers, coaches and deliverers to increase and sustain young women's sport participation
- An interactive 3 hour Workshop - Engaging Women and Girls in Sport & Physical Activity workshop aimed at community sport project leaders, coaches, volunteers, NGB development staff, colleges and students.
- Body Image Information pack and consultation 'quizzes' to understand individual participant motivations
- Marketing Toolkit
- Case studies & good practice examples
- Gender specific research and insight
- Us Girls merchandise for use as rewards and incentives
- Us Girls in Colleges Toolkit.

8. Management Style

8.1 The Us Girls management team adopted a participatory, supportive and flexible style of management to more effectively help projects reach their goals. They organised regional networks with regular meetings which allowed participants to input their successes, challenges, concerns, and questions. Projects were also encouraged to learn from each other and to share strategies and ideas. Projects managers felt that the management team listened to them and were able to help them address problems and challenges.

In terms of supporting the project they've been really great...they've been there sort of every time you've needed them...they've been at the end of an email and the response has been really, really speedy. (Project manager)

I think our experiences of StreetGames with this initiative is that there is a lot of very practical, useful support available. There's people to meet where some very practical things get offered, whether it's resources, whether it's ideas for where to get some more funding, whether its event and initiatives we can join in. (Project manager)

8.2 Flexibility was crucial for success and projects were encouraged to change and adapt their plans to increase their capacity to recruit participants and deliver effective programmes. The capacity to change and develop programmes was enhanced by the development and dissemination of resources including: a website, a three hour workshop, presentations at regional and national conferences and a series of how to guides which projects could access and use. These materials were based on external research, internal consultation and communication with projects.

I think it's [Us Girls] been very well organised. ...I did the conference last year... and you know good workshops, excellent workshops. I mean you quite often go to a workshop and get nothing out of it, but...most of, the majority of the ones I attended you came away with something. (Project Manager)

This flexible style translated to project delivery:

And we have been quite adaptable to our sessions, so if something's not worked, we've stopped it and thought of something else. So, we've not just stuck to it...we're not just sitting on something... (Project manager)

The commitment to actively helping projects meet their goals was successful and a crucial element of the final success.



Appendix 1. Programme Planning Checklist

The Programme Planning Checklist is designed as a resource for practitioners engaged in designing sport programmes for young women. It is based on factors that project managers, coaches and participants who were involved in Us Girls identified as contributing to their success. The checklist is not presented as a prescriptive menu of activities – the Us Girls findings indicated that projects that were tailored to local needs, resources, and participants were most effective. It is intended to help planners develop a project that will work for them. The checklist is designed to work with this report and the notes accompanying the checklist along with the report will help to clarify the information that might be needed to complete each step.

Overview of Programme	Completed
1. Title of programme	
2. Programme aims and objectives	
3. Rationale for programme	
4. Funding for programme	
5. Sponsors/funders interests and requirements	
6. Management style	
7. Partnerships	
8. Consultation	
Planning including assessment of resources	
9. Marketing and recruiting	
10. Facilities and location	
11. Timescale	
12. Target population	
13. Time of day	
14. Activities	
15. Cost for participants	
16. Equipment	
17. Cost of delivering programme	
18. Incentives	
19. Child Care	
Programme Delivery	
20. Staffing	
21. Organisation	
Programme Evaluation	
22. Evaluation	
23. Dissemination	

Appendix 2. Notes for Programme Planning Checklist

1. Title of programme

The name you will use to advertise the specific programme. The Us Girls title was effective as it appealed to the target population and was widely used by the partners. Subsequently the branded merchandise was used widely by partners as incentives for participation. The title and design were developed through consultation with partners and potential participants. An initial logo and name commissioned by an advertising firm was rejected as it was not felt that it would appeal to young women. The success of the Us Girls brand has meant that it has become part of StreetGames' portfolio of programmes and will continue to be used.



2. Programme Aims and Objectives

Aims help define the broad focus of the programme. What are you trying to achieve overall? The broad aim for the Us Girls project was to get 30,000 women from socially disadvantaged backgrounds more active. Objectives are more specific indicators of what you will do to reach your aims. Programmes varied in terms of the specific objectives.

Objectives for Us Girls programmes included running a festival, developing an activity programme in a college,

3. Rationale for the programme

The rationale is the underpinning evidence for how your programme or intervention will work. The rationale may be based on previous research, statistics, consultation or local knowledge that support the need for your programme and the way that you have designed it.

For example, research indicates that young Asian women have lower participation rates than many of their peers. One of the problems is the lack of suitable activities and sporting environments that meet their needs. For example, some women require activities that can do in traditional clothing. Through consultation organizers found that a number of women in the community wanted to try cycling. The organizers then initiated a cycling programme where women could have access to bicycles in a traffic-free area.

4. Funding for the programme

Evaluate the best way to use funds to help meet programme aims. Us Girls projects' primary expenses were staff and facility hire. Other costs that may help increase participants' interest, motivation and enjoyment include: Incentives, subsidizing qualifications, trips, equipment, healthy snacks, free passes, membership cards, marketing, and prizes.

5. Sponsor/Funders interests and requirements

If funding is provided by a sponsor ensure your use of funds is consistent with any requirements or aims attached to the funding. If possible, allow some flexibility. Some of the UsGirls projects adjusted their target sports/populations in order to better meet the needs of the participants. The flexibility of the management team meant that projects were able to use learning to develop better programmes rather than adhere to a pre-determined programme that was less successful.

6. Management Style

The Us Girls management team adopted a supportive, flexible, communicative, and participatory approach during the project. They provided opportunities to get feedback and information from national partners through regional meetings and an annual national conference. They viewed their role as helping projects to succeed and therefore were open to new ideas, innovative approaches, and changing plans and strategies that were not working.

7. Partnerships

Partnerships can be used in a range of ways to help develop projects. This includes gaining access to populations, identifying gaps in provision, sharing resources such as facilities and equipment, sharing delivery, and working together on events and festivals. Part of Us Girls success can be attributed to the strength of their national and local partnerships.

8. Consultation

A key part of planning is consultation with the target population. This should help planners make more specific decisions about the best way to market the programme as well as key elements associated with planning such as activity type, time of day, child care provision and cost.

9. Marketing and recruiting

Attracting hard to reach groups to programmes can be challenging. What forms of communication will work best for your target population? What strategies can you use to create to encourage people to attend?

Us Girls programmes used a range of marketing strategies to attract young women to their programmes including flyers, local newspapers, and social media. Many projects found that taster sessions, festivals, open days, and visits to intact groups which provided potential participants with an idea of what sessions might be like worked well. Marketing materials with the strapline fun, friends and fitness and images of 'normal' women were effective for recruiting as well.

10. Facilities and Location

Where will your session take place? Some event planners in Us Girls saved money by organizing sessions during off-peak hours, sharing facilities, offering activities to intact

groups using their facilities, using community spaces like churches and schools, offering activities in public outdoor spaces. Us Girls' participants tended to prefer convenient, accessible, and familiar places. Travel may be necessary to access particular facilities but this needs to be arranged in consultation with participants to ensure it will work. For example a cycling programme involved traveling to a traffic-free location, and the StreetDance project Dare to Dance held some sessions and a final performance in a theatre.

11. Timescale

Identify the length of time that the programme will run including holidays or breaks. The Us Girls projects were funded for two years and some projects ran particular sessions for two years while others offered a menu of shorter activities sessions.

12. Target Population

Are you trying to attract a specific group? What is the underpinning rationale for including this group? Do members of this population have particular needs, interests, or face potential barriers that need to be considered? Do you need to consult with this group to insure that your programme will recruit effectively?

Us Girls projects were designed to attract 16-25 year old women from disadvantaged backgrounds. Projects found that targeting specific populations (e.g. college students, young mums, full-time work...) could help with recruiting by matching programmes to participants' needs and interests.

13. Time of Day

Is there a particular time that will work best for the group that you are hoping to recruit? Are there considerations in relation to facilities, convenience, or potential conflicts with other obligations?

14. Activities

What activities are you hoping to deliver and what are the implications for the aims of the programme and the desired population? Do you want to consider introducing new sports or will traditional activities work best? Are you interested in more fitness based activities?

Us girls participants enjoyed a range of activities from individual fitness-based such a Zumba or bootcamp to team sports such as netball and basketball. Many women enjoyed variety and multi-sport sessions were very popular.

15. Cost for participants

Will there be a cost to participants? How will this impact the ability of the programmes to attract participants? Is it possible to offer some if not all sessions at no cost?

Us Girls projects often used free sessions to attract participants to try activities and a number of participants stated that this motivated to attend the first time. If there were

going to be subsequent fees these were advertised initially as well in order to make sure participants were clear about costs. While not all participants felt that they were able to pay, many programmes had small fees. The maximum Us Girls participants were willing or able to pay was £3. Participants preferred to pay at each session and not pay monthly fees.

16. Equipment

Is the necessary equipment available to run the sessions? Multi-sports can be more challenging due to the range of equipment required. Sometimes equipment can be accessed through partnerships with schools, leisure centres or other organizations.

17. Cost of delivering programme

Is there a workable budget for the programme? How long will the budget last? What strategies can be used to help sustain successful programmes? Us Girls teams often used partnerships to help share the cost of running programmes.

18. Incentives

Do you wish to offer incentives? Incentives may be used in marketing or to encourage participants to attend regularly. It may be useful to consult to ensure that incentives are attractive to participants or potential participants.

Us Girls developed a range of merchandise that could be used as incentives including water bottles, bags, watches, sweatshirts and t-shirts. These were handed out during taster sessions and festivals to help with recruiting. They were also used within sessions to reward participants for attendance. Free sessions were also used to encourage young women to attend, Bring a friend incentives were also popular with women offered free sessions for themselves and their friend.

19. Child care

For some participants childcare is essential. Young mums often worry about leaving children in the care of others and strategies to ensure they are comfortable with the options will facilitate participation.

Some Us Girls projects felt that child care was not necessary as their target populations either did not have children or had sufficient provision. Other project managers felt that some provision was necessary and some of the strategies they used included providing joint activities for mothers and children, providing simultaneous activities in the same location, providing subsidized child care, and allowing women to bring children to classes.

20. Staffing

Who will run the sessions? Will they need training or support? Are they able to match their delivery style to the needs of the population? Coaches played a key role in participants' enjoyment and in helping to sustain their ongoing attendance. Qualities

that were valued in a coach included: welcoming, fun, friendly, motivating and inclusive. The Us Girls preferred delivery style and organization differed from traditional youth sport and PE contexts and coaches who are unfamiliar with the target group may benefit from some training in how best to work with specific groups.

21. Organisation

The atmosphere and organization of sessions needs to be considered in order to develop effective marketing materials, delivery taster sessions, and ensure that participants will have fun, feel comfortable and want to attend regularly. It is also important to sure that the style of sessions meets participants' expectations and motivations for attending.

The Us Girls sessions were relaxed, social, and active. Young women wanted to have fun, try new activities, and get fitter. Young women enjoyed having input into sessions and valued more participatory approaches by coaches who listened to what they want. Music, time for conversation, and having a laugh were valued. Young women also wanted to feel like they were working hard and getting more fit.

Us Girls participants also valued spaces where they did not have to worry about appearance or whether they were good enough. The coaches and participants worked together in many cases to create a comfortable, inclusive, and friendly environment that prioritized participation over winning or demonstrating that you were better than someone else. Competition was motivating for many women but efforts were made to ensure that it was fun and inclusive and not embarrassing for less skilled individuals.

22. Evaluation

What elements of the programme will be evaluated? These should be created with specific attention to aims, objectives and outcome indicators as discussed previously. Will the evaluation be conducted by programme coordinator, coaches, administrative staff, or is there a need for external researchers to be involved?

StreetGames programmes already have a format for recording key performance indicators including numbers of participants, volunteers, and qualifications. Individual programmes might want to consider whether they wish to systematically record other indicators of success. In addition, projects developed case studies which demonstrated individual success stories and highlighted innovative and effective programmes.

The Us Girls initiative used a range of evaluation methods including statistics, surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Programme managers used consultations and recorded KPIs using the StreetGames online tool. External researchers conducted surveys, interviews and focus groups to gain understanding of the experiences of project managers, coaches and participants with a view to understanding what was working. The process-based evaluation forms used by Us Girls involved beginning to evaluate the programme during the early stages so that the findings could be used to feedback to

projects with ideas about what was working in other projects and to inform the development of training materials and workshops for the Us Girls partners. A final survey was also used to learn more about the attitudes and experiences of participants, coaches, and managers at the end of the project.

23. Dissemination

What are your plans for disseminating information about what happened in your projects? This could be showcasing it locally, discussing it on the web or developing reports based on the evaluation research. Projects have made videos, created information sheets with descriptions of the projects and case studies, and created web pages that can be used to support funding applications or in marketing materials.

Us Girls dissemination strategies were extensive and included: a website with information, images, reports, and resources; regional and national conferences; a three hour workshop; how-to guides; presentations; and, reports.

Appendix 3. Overview of Methods

This research for Us Girls was developed through a participatory framework that centred on generating knowledge that could be used by the management team to facilitate their capacity to reach their target of creating sporting opportunities that would engage young women from socially disadvantaged background in sport. The process-based data that emerged was used to support planning and delivery of physical activity for young womenⁱⁱ. This included a focus on what works as well as attention to challenges and issues that project managers, coaches and participants experienced^{xv}. The data tends to focus on successful elements of the programme as the intention was to increase learning of ‘what works’. We did, however, learn about the many challenges experienced by project managers, coaches and participants which was useful to gain understanding of the various issues that impact participation.

The methods we used were interviews, observations, and focus groups. During the research process we made 20 visits to different programmes for data collection including interviews with 14 programme coordinators and conducted focus groups with participants and coaches during 13 activity sessions. We also attended regional and national meetings and met with the Us Girls management team in order to discuss the research, the development of resources and the Us Girls programmes more broadly.

The data for this report was collected in two parts:

Part 1: Interviews with Project Managers and Participants

We collected individual interview data from project managers within the first 6-8 months of the Us Girls initiative. These interviews were typically long (30 minutes to 2 hours) and detailed and focused on an array of themes regarding participant characteristics, programme design and delivery, and sustainability. These were primarily conducted in person but there were two occasions where we held telephone interviews. We also conducted focus groups with participants during this phase.

Part 2: Focus groups with Participants and Coaches

Data from participants and coaches was typically collected in focus groups either before or after an activity session. Observations were also used to contextualize the data from the focus groups. The focus groups were typically shorter in length 10-30 minutes and included between 4 and 8 women depending on how many were willing to participate. These were often conducted in sports halls, sitting on the floor or benches and sometimes in noisy rooms.

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