

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM MULTICULTURAL BACKGROUNDS THROUGH SPORT

“sport speaks to people in a language they can understand.”

- Nelson Mandela

Introduction

The benefits of sports and active recreation are widespread, both for individuals and community. Physically, the benefits of sport include improved fitness and decreased risk of disease. Psychologically, sport can counteract stress and depression, build self-esteem, and increase mental alertness. The wider community benefits from the social impacts of sport, such as an increase in social cohesion, reduced isolation, reduced anti-social behaviour and crime.¹

For multicultural young people*, sport has additional benefits. Young people from multicultural backgrounds face particular challenges as part of the refugee and migration experience. These barriers include language, culture, unfamiliarity with Australian systems and processes (including the service system), racism, and discrimination.² Sport can play a big part in addressing these issues.

Opportunities to promote the wellbeing and integration of multicultural young people into the wider community are particularly important. Research conducted by the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) has highlighted how sport can deliver “...a sense of purpose and direction for young people recovering from the traumas of the refugee experience or the impact of racism.”³ Its role in breaking down barriers can be particularly effective.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, particularly young women, are underrepresented in sporting teams and recreation activities.⁴ However, multicultural young people do participate willingly in sport and recreational activities when they are in familiar and supportive environments, such as at school, and in ethnic and cultural organisations.

Sports clubs, associations and competitions can be strange and unfamiliar environments for multicultural young people. Sporting organisations and programs wishing to engage multicultural young people must understand and address the barriers that multicultural young people face. This will achieve benefits, both for the young people and for the club.

This fact sheet includes some tips and strategies for sports bodies, youth services and multicultural services working with young people on things to keep in mind when engaging multicultural young people through sport, as well as case studies of good practice from organisations in NSW that have successfully engaged multicultural young people through sports.

Benefits of Sport for Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds

There are many benefits for young people taking part in sport. These include personal, social, cultural and economical benefits.⁵ For multicultural young people, sport and recreation can provide additional benefits, particularly in the first few years of settlement. Sport can help young people to learn English, create positive spaces for contact with other young people, and provide a sense of purpose and direction for young people who have experienced trauma through their refugee experience, or the impact of racism.⁶

The table below outlines some of the many benefits that sport can provide⁷:

Personal	Socio-cultural	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical health • Stress management • Self-esteem • Academic performance • Sense of achievement, meaning and life satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social interaction and community strengthening • Reduced antisocial behaviour and crime • Promotion of ethnic and cultural harmony • Strengthening families • Promoting community involvement, pride and empowerment • Offering access for the disabled or disadvantaged • Promotes ethical behaviour models • National cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-effective health prevention • Fit, productive workforce • Business growth • Reduces costs of crime • Tourism • Employment • International representation and influence

For young people from multicultural backgrounds, there are often further benefits from taking part in sports. These include:

- Sport assists with trust building
- Sport facilitates settlement and transitions
- Sport act as a positive diversion strategy, by giving young people a positive focus in their lives
- Sport helps to build capacity
- Sport acts as an entry point to further participation in the broader Australian community
- Sport and recreation as a vehicle to build community understanding
- Increase in skills levels of current and new players

Case study - Sporting Linx

STARTTS recently launched a 3 year program called Sporting Linx, which endeavors to use community based sports programs to promote skills development and community capacity building. Sporting Linx does this through 3 platforms:

1. An after-school sports program
2. A leadership development camp; and
3. A community planned and run Sports Gala day, with participants drawn from local high schools in the Auburn, Holroyd and Blacktown areas.

The program is run with the assistance of community and professional sports coaches and volunteers, along with parent participation and community consultation. The program aims to create a sporting network to be maintained by the program participants, and will continue as a community based and operated resource.

STARTTS helps to reduce barriers to participation, such as:

1. The cost of registration, fees, equipment, uniforms;
2. Access - knowing how and when to sign up or register;
3. Language, which is a factor with regard to things like application forms and understanding coaching instructions;
4. Isolation - some people have reported that they do not know anyone else to play sport with, causing them to stay isolated within their community.

STARTTS addresses these barriers in a number of ways, such as:

1. Highlighting pathways and potential assistance with costs involved;
2. Forming partnerships with government organisations and local sports organisations;
3. Providing assistance and access to staff who assist with language issues, and providing coaches who are aware of the issues;
4. Providing programs that integrate young people from different backgrounds through a common goal.

Key throughout the program is the use of team work, acceptance and support of difference. As a result of Sporting Linx, outcomes include:

- 42 young people have completed training certificates in coaching and refereeing
- Young people have volunteered to coach others
- Providing equipment to a local soccer team
- Positive feedback about activities, and what is learnt from the program
- Young people have accessed local clubs for sport
- Young people have been asked to try out for representative teams

For STARTTS, Sporting Linx enables staff to create ongoing relationships with young people and as they grow and develop, giving the opportunity for mentoring both of and by the participants. The acquisition of skills in coaching can be used for community development in future programs.

Looking forward, Sporting Linx hopes to expand into other after school activities and provide a jumping point into local club sports participation. Sporting Linx also plan to utilise young people's new coaching skills in various places throughout Western Sydney.

Benefits for Sports Clubs and Organisations

For sporting clubs and organisations, there are a wide range of benefits that come from engaging with young people from communities that have not traditionally taken part in your sport. These benefits include⁸:

- An increase in your membership base
- Financial benefits that come from a greater membership base
- Opportunities to access and recruit often untapped resources, such as skilled and gifted players
- Social benefits associated with new members and their family groups taking part in your club's activities and events
- Potential to attract new volunteers to help with a wide range of things, such as coaching, refereeing and club administration
- An increase in the numbers of spectators
- Potential assistance for seeking funds such as grants, donations and sponsorship
- Opportunities to diversify and learn about other cultures, both for the new communities taking part in your club, and for the more established communities
- A more accurate reflection of the cultural demographics of your local area
- Increased status within the broader community, by fostering an atmosphere of inclusion and respect

Barriers to Participation

Multicultural young people have a high level of interest in sport. Despite this, there are a number of barriers that can prevent participation. Being able to identify and address these barriers with and for young people is important to successfully engaging them in sport. Young people themselves have identified barriers such as:⁹

- Not knowing the rules
- Not knowing where to play
- Having other commitments
- Parents / guardians not being happy with their participation
- Lack of transportation

Research has also shown other barriers, some of which are listed below:¹⁰

- Lack of inclusive and accessible environments
- Limited access to public space and facilities
- Language and cultural barriers
- Racism and discrimination
- Financial constraints

Specific barriers can exist for young women to participate in sport. These can stem from cultural appropriateness, further limited "by both the nature of sporting environments themselves and cultural restrictions from within (young women's) own communities."¹¹

Case Study: AFL NSW / ACT & Holroyd Parramatta Goannas AFC

The Holroyd Parramatta Goannas is a junior league Australian Football League Club, part of AFL NSW/ACT. The local club's region is the Holroyd Council area, and parts of Blacktown and Parramatta Councils.

In 2012, the Goannas under 18s team was struggling for numbers. The team's coach began to work closely with the AFL's multicultural department to approach young people who otherwise would not be exposed to structured, weekend sport. Targeting young people who attended the Intensive English Centre (IEC) at Evans High School, as well as working closely with the multicultural team at GWS Giants, the Goannas were able to introduce several young African men to their first AFL training session. As word of mouth spread, the Goannas received further interest from young people from Doonside High School and Chifley College in Mt Druitt.

The Goannas learned to change the way they operate, in order to address the challenges that some of the young players were experiencing, including:

- Transport
- Knowledge of the game
- Keeping a schedule (game times and attending training)
- Missing dinner on training nights
- Fitting into a team

Coach David Hook has implemented a number of changes to address the barriers his players were facing. He has worked with coaches and injured older players in order to arrange transport for players. He has brought young multicultural players to watch the Giants vs Swans game during the AFL's multicultural round, to increase their knowledge of the rules and the game environment. He has introduced incentives for training attendance, as well as providing a BBQ on Tuesdays and Thursdays (including Halal options) for young players, all of which has been supported by the club and other players.

While the team struggled for the first part of the year, persistence led to their first win, and to becoming an increasingly challenging team to beat for other clubs throughout the year. Players have been identified by the Giants Academy, and some have begun to train with the under 18's at the Giants training facility. Moreover, coach David Hook noticed a shift in their engagement with the sport: "Each week the kids began talking to one another about the outcomes of the AFL games on the weekend. They began supporting different teams from all around the country, based on the colour of the jerseys, favourite players, and ways they could identify with the teams through other avenues such as those with a player from a similar background to themselves."

When speaking of the benefits to the club and players alike, David says "It was a great way to expose the kids to the game of AFL as well as exposing the club to a different avenue of recruitment. I also had kids interested who were too young to play in my under 18's team, which I've referred to younger aged teams. Feedback I received from the coach was fantastic, with the parents creating a roster on who would pick him up for games and training each week."

Tips and Strategies to Increase Participation

For sporting bodies and associations

Sporting clubs and associations can play a key role in engaging young people from multicultural backgrounds. The following tips and strategies can help to promote the inclusion of multicultural young people:

Policy and environment:

- Discuss the benefits of increasing participation of multicultural groups within your club or organisation
- Develop a multicultural plan which allocates responsibility, resources and accountability
- Provide relevant information and training to your staff, volunteers, coaches, trainers etc
- Collect information and data about the multicultural population in your area
- Review your existing policies to ensure they reflect diversity, and ensure that staff at all levels are actively involved in the process, and that management provide structure and practical support to enable practice of such policies.
- Consult relevant stakeholders such as staff, government and non-government agencies in the development or review of your multicultural policies
- Actively encourage people from multicultural communities to apply for paid positions within your organisation
- Set up a system to collect information about multicultural clients who access your club or organisation, and review and evaluate this information regularly

Working with young people:

- Consult with multicultural young people and identify their needs
- Identify the barriers to accessing your club or sport that young people may face, and take steps to address them

Communication and collaboration:

- Build partnerships (with sport, community, local government, multicultural, and settlement services) and work together with organisations that support multicultural goals, to maximise effectiveness and draw on different expertise
- Involve families by holding open days and information sessions, as young people often rely on parents for permission to play¹²
- Provide information and information sessions where multicultural young people are: settlement services, youth services, language schools, high schools etc.¹³
- Actively promote your programs outside your mainstream membership base
- Avoid the use of stereotypical images that may be perceived as excluding certain groups
- Use a variety of communication strategies to reach multicultural groups, including translation to provide information in different languages, and avoiding Australian jargon

Innovation:

- Offer a range of programs that are gender specific and culturally sensitive to the needs of multicultural groups
- Ensure programs are accessible to young women by, for example, implementing flexible program times, culturally specific programs (such as women's only swimming programs), having sufficient female supervisors and/or trainers¹⁴
- Be flexible with uniform requirements, or provide subsidies as their cost can be prohibitive¹⁵
- As transport can often prevent young people from participating, include information about local transport services, coordinate with schools and youth services for transport options, or coordinate with other parents for a car pool¹⁶

For multicultural services and youth services

Sport is useful and beneficial to the wellbeing of multicultural young people, as well as assisting with good settlement outcomes for newly arrived young people. Youth and multicultural services can harness sport in order to further engage with, and support, multicultural young people. Some strategies and tips to do this include:

- Build partnerships with local government, schools, health initiatives, sporting associations and organisations to maximise effectiveness and draw on different expertise
- Develop recognition and resourcing of sport and recreation within settlement and youth services¹⁷
- Encourage supportive parents by running health projects targeting newly arrived families¹⁸
- Improve access to sport and recreation facilities in your local area through:
 - a) Ensuring local government leisure services are accountable for equitable access to facilities;
 - b) Exploring ways for school facilities to be more accessible to local communities after hours.¹⁹
 - c) Utilising brokerage funding available to subsidise costs to formal sport activities.
- Integrate sports information and options into the settlement process²⁰
- Introduce and orientate multicultural young people involved in your service to local facilities and sporting clubs through excursions or outings
- Invite local sporting organisations or clubs to run activities with multicultural young people in partnership with settlement and/or youth services
- Consult with young people about sport - what preferences and interests do they have?
- Ensure female sporting role models or coaches are available to cater to the needs of multicultural young women, such as women only sports clinics
- Look at sports broadly, how is it defined? think broadly - include things like yoga and dance
- Offer training and support on cultural diversity - connect with sports organisations and assist them to transition to a cultural friendly club through diversity training. This might include one on one chats, advice and assistance, or connecting them with those that can provide training.

Case study: Netball NSW

Netball NSW is committed to assisting its associations to be inclusive, recognising that Australia is a nation of diverse cultures and beliefs. Netball NSW believes netball can play a pivotal role in developing tolerant and cohesive communities. In developing programs and initiatives aligned with the needs of multicultural people, Netball NSW works closely with multicultural organisations to identify barriers and develop strategies to encourage involvement of multicultural communities.

Netball NSW has identified a number of barriers to young peoples' participation - such as costs of registrations and uniforms, access to transport, lack of knowledge about the sport and lack of parental support and involvement. Netball NSW has undertaken various activities to actively reduce the identified barriers. Netball NSW is seeking funding to subsidise costs, holds programs directly after school or during school hours, and holds programs in venues that are easily accessible by public transport. Netball NSW also runs free 'Come and Try' sessions throughout metropolitan Sydney, including targeted introductory clinics during school hours. These events are promoted through multicultural and ethno-specific organisations. Networking with local schools and information sessions also acts to engage with parents, although this remains a barrier, as does the need for ongoing funding to support this work.

For Netball NSW, working with multicultural communities and young people allows them to engage a wider portion of the population, increase the number of members and volunteers involved, as well as using facilities that may be under utilised. Netball NSW has seen a number of benefits as a result of its focus on multicultural communities. These include:

- An increase in the participation of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in both its in school and out-of-school programs
- Enhanced profile of netball in targeted migrant and refugee communities
- Demand from Associations who wish to engage with migrant and refugee communities
- An increase of inclusive sporting environments.

Further Reading

If you are interested in reading more about using sport to engage multicultural young people, the following reports may be useful:

Sport and Recreation as a Tool for Social Inclusion: The Experiences of Refugee and Migrant Young People, Refugee Youth Issues Paper, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Melbourne, 2007

A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the Participation of Refugees in Sporting Activities, Refugee Council of Australia, Sydney, 2010

Giving Communities a Sporting Chance: A Multicultural Resource Kit, CMY, Melbourne, 2010

Emerging Communities are Sporting Communities, Tip Sheet No. 14, CMY, Melbourne, 2009

References

- ¹ Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), *A Bridge to a New Culture: Promoting the participation of refugees in sporting activities*, RCOA, Sydney, 2010
- * MYAN NSW defines multicultural young people as those aged 12-25 who are newly arrived young people, particularly those from refugee or humanitarian backgrounds, including international students and young people who were born in Australia to parents who settled in Australia as migrants or refugees.
- ² Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network of Australia (MYAN Australia), *MYAN 2013 Election Policy Platform*, 2013, retrieved via <http://www.myan.org.au/file/file/MYAN%20ELECTION%20PLATFORM%20Revised%20Nov%202013.pdf>
- ³ J Dykes & L. Olliff, *Sport and Recreation as a Tool for Social Inclusion: The Experiences of Refugee and Migrant Young People*, Refugee Youth Issues Paper, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Melbourne, 2007, p. 1. Retrieved via www.cmy.net.au/uploads/downloads/CMY/pdfs/Publications/SportsTipSheets/SportTips08_SportandSocialInclusion.pdf,
- ⁴ Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), *Sport and recreation as a tool for social inclusion: The experiences of refugee and migrant young people*, Tip Sheet No. 8, CMY, Melbourne, 2007, retrieved via http://www.cmy.net.au/Assets/332/1/SportTips08_SportandSocialInclusion.pdf
- ⁵ *ibid.*, p.7
- ⁶ CMY, *op. cit.*
- ⁷ CMY, *op. cit.*
- ⁸ RCOA, *op.cit.*, p. 6 - 7.
- ⁹ L. Oliff, *op.cit.*
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*
- ¹¹ RCOA, *op. cit.*
- ¹² CMY, *Giving Communities a Sporting Chance: A Multicultural Resource Kit*, CMY, Melbourne, 2010, retrieved via <http://www.cmy.net.au/Assets/1397/5/GivingCommunitiesaSportingChance.pdf>
- ¹³ *ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*
- ¹⁵ *ibid*
- ¹⁶ *ibid*
- ¹⁷ L. Oliff, *op. cit.* p.8
- ¹⁸ *ibid*
- ¹⁹ *ibid*
- ²⁰ CMY, *Emerging Communities are Sporting Communities*, Tip Sheet No. 14, CMY, Melbourne, 2009, retrieved via http://www.cmy.net.au/Assets/1304/1/SportsTips14_EmergingCommunities.pdf