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Influencing Policy. Raising Aspirations.

Exploring the impact of the Street Child World Cup on the young people who participate, their communities, and the organisations supporting them.

Su Lyn Corcoran, Jeremy Oldfield and Alice Bloom

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Cover image by Ilya Maliy. Other photographs by Polina Bykonya, Ilya Maliy and Megafon.

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“We say that the world conspires to make the Street Child World Cup happen”

John Wroe, Street Child United



Acronyms

NGO	non-governmental organisations
SCCWC	Street Child Cricket World Cup
SCG	Street Child Games
SCU	Street Child United
SCWC	Street Child World Cup

Glossary of terms

Children are defined as being under 18 years old. As SCU events are for children aged 17 and under, we will be referring to children mostly in this report

Young People are defined as being children and youth.

Youth are defined as being between 18 and 35 years of age in accordance with the African Union definition (Aryeetey et al. 2014)

1. Executive summary

The Street Child World Cup (SCWC) aims to use the power of football and the arts to raise awareness of and tackle the widespread stigma faced by street-connected children globally. Through the tournament, an arts festival and the General Assembly, Street Child United (SCU) use each event to amplify the voices of these children in a bid to change how they are positioned and supported in society. As the fourth SCU event to be held since 2010, the 2018 SCWC provided an opportunity to reflect upon the challenges and opportunities that have arisen in relation to previous events as well as to focus on the event in Moscow as it unfolded. This independent research study, therefore, aimed to understand the impact of participating in a SCWC on the players, their communities and the organisations that support them.

Data was generated through questionnaires distributed to Team Leaders before the event in Moscow, face-to-face interviews with Team Leaders, players and Youth Leaders at the event, and face-to-face or WhatsApp interviews with players and Team Leaders in the 18 months after the event. The findings indicate the importance of effective structures to create the foundation for meaningful participation and to ensure that being part of the SCWC is mostly a positive experience for the organisations who register to bring teams to the event and for the teams themselves. In particular, these structures relate to the development of programmes to prepare the teams for travelling to the event and supporting them when they return, as well as for advocacy strategies that lead to sustainable, long-term change.

Key Findings

Participating in a SCU event can be a confidence-building experience for the players. They are able to feel proud of being selected to represent their country, interact with and learn from children in similar situations to them but from other countries, and become motivated to complete their education and/or think about their future differently. A number of the organisations who register to participate in a SCU event integrate the opportunity into a wider programme focused on developing strong role models - either to provide peer support for other children or as a spokesperson within a larger advocacy programme. As such participating in a SCU event can provide positive benefits to the wider community by raising their aspirations also.

Impact was greater, and generally more positive, when effective frameworks of support were in place. For example, the development of comprehensive programmes of preparation that: managed the expectations of players, parents and the wider community; developed integrated programmes of training to help the players to play together as a team; delivered child rights education to prepare them for the Congress; and focused on what was expected of the players (and the challenges they would face) when they returned home. Impact was also greater when these frameworks continued after the event, supporting the players with the emotional upheaval of returning to 'normal' life after being the centre of attention for 12 days. Good practice described by the Team Leaders include the provision of counselling, especially from a qualified counsellor, and/or at the very least a space in which the players are able to share their experiences and reconnect with other players who had been at the SCWC.

As suggested by such frameworks, getting players to the event involves a great deal of work that can take the staff at the organisations fielding the teams away from their usual day-to-day work. In smaller organisations with less human resource capacity, other programmes of intervention can be affected as staff focus on getting everything in place to travel to the SCWC. The additional work includes, but is not limited to, fundraising to take the team to the event, selecting and training the team, applying for birth certificates, passports and other legal documents to take the children out of the country and the related tasks of finding and negotiating with potentially absent parents during the process. Most Team Leaders reported limited financial benefits to their organisations from their participation in the event but they all reported a degree of success in meeting advocacy goals. In general, larger organisations, or those who had participated for a number of SCU events and had spent years developing their approaches to both supporting the players and integrating the SCWC into their long-term advocacy strategy, were more able to engage with the media and negotiate the inclusion of their particular advocacy messages in the stories presented. In addition, the higher up the tournament leader board a team managed to reach, the greater the media coverage they attracted. This raises important questions about the support structures that could be put in place to both address the impact on workload and leverage greater impact from the event.

The Congress, which provides a space in which the players share their stories and develop messages to disseminate on an international stage at the General Assembly, was described positively by most Team Leaders interviewed as the focus on the event. The players develop the confidence to reflect upon the challenges they faced – especially in relation to the problems faced by other teams – and to visualise solutions to these problems and a focus on the future. The messages the players develop for the General Assembly are rooted in the experiences they share and are therefore inextricably part of who they are. When these messages translate into limited tangible impact, which is to be expected given the nature of the event and the timescales over which transformative change takes place in practice, the players can be left disappointed after the hype of speaking in front of ‘the world’. Team Leaders who managed players expectations, by helping them to understand the degree to which delivering their messages leads to change as part of a long-term process that could take years, reported greater levels of impact and confidence building for the players. These Team Leaders described follow-on programmes of advocacy and support that aimed to build on and develop the sustainability of these messages – involving the players in advocacy strategies and encouraging them to be role models for other street-connected children.

Finally, SCU value long-term partnerships with the organisations who register to participate: developing an international network that can offer guidance and support to each other in their work. The networks developed between organisations was discussed positively in terms of providing supportive spaces where Team Leaders and other staff members could learn from each other. However, the ability of this network to deliver a stronger, collaborative, advocacy message was not discussed in positive terms and there were Team Leaders who wanted the network to be developed towards greater impact through a long-term focus on why children are on the street rather than just the event itself.

Recommendations

In light of the above findings, this report makes the following recommendations:

1. It is important to develop structures that provide safe spaces for participation for the players as well as safe, supported transitions as they return to their 'normal' lives in their home countries.
2. Street Child United should ensure that the organisations who sign up to a SCWC are aware of the importance of such effective support structures as early as possible.
3. There is a need to further raise the profile of the General Assembly and the messages developed by the players, and to explore how these messages can be further developed through long-term advocacy programmes that continue after the events.
4. The international network developed by SCU, has the potential to provide clear structures in which the organisations registered to participate in a SCU event are able to share their experiences and models of good practice. Given the different contexts within which each of the organisations work, SCU could support them to adapt and develop these experiences into culturally appropriate programmes of work.
5. It is important to help players understand that being part of the SCWC cannot immediately change their lived realities, but that it could instead become an important part of a long-term process, and that positive experiences at the event could help them to develop self-confidence and the strength to face the barriers they experience at home.
6. Better modes of engaging with the media and focused advocacy to achieve real change should be developed, while also ensuring that the players understand that change is made little by little – in small steps.

"I want to use this event to let the world know about my country and through the games I want the world to know how nice my country is, to make new friends, and to explore this new place [Moscow]."

Player from Team D



2 Introduction

“When people see us by the streets, they say that we are the street boys. But when they see us playing soccer, they say that we are not the street boys – they say that we are people like them”

(Andile, Team South Africa Player 2010)

2.1 Rationale for the project

The research project explored in this report is an independent study conducted by researchers at Manchester Metropolitan University. It resulted from conversations with the staff at Street Child United (SCU) who organise the Street Child World Cup (SCWC) about the impact of participating in the events on the players who take part. SCU value long-term partnerships with the organisations who apply, and are selected, to field teams at their international events. One of their aims is to develop a global network of these organisations that can offer guidance and support to each other in their work, and can amplify the voices of the children who participate in their programmes of intervention. The SCWC in Moscow, 2018, was the fourth SCU event and as such, it provided an opportunity to both look back and reflect on the challenges and opportunities that had arisen previously and to explore the short-term impact of the Moscow event in real time to understand what has been learnt.

This research project aimed to explore how the organisations prepare the teams for travelling to the event and how they support the players when they return to their home countries, to both identify examples of good practice and understand the challenges they faced. In understanding the nature of the opportunities and the challenges, the project aimed to highlight key recommendations for how SCU work with partners, especially in mitigating and addressing the impact of the challenges for future events. Exploring the impact of participating in the SCWC events, we can provide recommendations for SCU partners to better support the children who compete in them and for other organisations planning to run an international sporting event focused on the participation of children for advocacy purposes.

This report outlines the key findings from a research study conducted between May 2018 and December 2019. It focuses on the benefits and challenges of bringing teams of children to the 2018 SCWC as well the SCU events that preceded it. In particular, the report explores what the players and Team Leaders’ experiences of before, during and after the event can teach us about how to address the challenges and leverage positive outcomes for the players and the organisations that support them.

2.2 Street Child United

The inspiration for the first Street Child World Cup came from a boy in South Africa. When talking about how football made him feel, he gave the quote at the top of this page. At the time, there were stories of children being rounded up from the streets to make them ‘clean’ in preparation for the 2010 FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) World Cup and widespread children’s rights abuses associated with the event (e.g. Van Blerk 2011, 2013). Therefore, holding a Street Child

World Cup would not only provide street-connected children with the opportunity to be somebody by representing their country, it provided an opportunity to shine a light on the issues affecting the wider street-connected population in South Africa and other countries fielding teams at the event.

Since 2010, Street Child United (SCU) has organised three Street Child World Cup (SCWC) events (on each occasion taking place ahead of the FIFA Football World Cup), using the ‘power of football’ and the arts to raise awareness and tackle the widespread stigma faced by street-connected children - aiming to inspire countries, governments and communities to better protect, respect and support them. In addition to the SCWC, SCU has also held the Street Child Games (SCG) in Rio in 2016 and the first Street Child Cricket World Cup (SCCWC) in Cambridge in 2019. SCU want to change the way the world sees and treats street-connected children. Each of the events provides an opportunity to bring international teams to the host countries to compete, make their voices heard, and change how they are positioned and supported in society.

The SCWC is not just about football. An arts festival takes place alongside the tournament, using painting, theatre and music to help the children overcome language barriers, have fun, laugh together, and reflect on what is happening at the event. The arts can also engage audiences, build confidence and communicate beyond spoken language. Cultural exchange is promoted and each team puts on an evening performance inspired by their country’s history and culture as well as learning about the culture of the host country through activities with local communities and visiting historical and cultural landmarks. As the event is about advocacy and sending a message to the world about street-connected children, it also encourages children to speak out about their lives on a global platform. A Congress brings the children together to learn about their rights, share their experiences, and identify priorities that they think governments and policy makers should put in place for a fairer world for all street-connected children. The resulting messages are delivered at a General Assembly attended by key stakeholders such as country ambassadors and policy makers, as well as global media.

2.3 ‘Street’ or ‘street-connected’: problematic definitions

For a number of the players who participate in SCU events, being defined as a ‘street child’ is problematic. They do not like being referred to by the phrase because of the stigmatisation that they face and how street children are defined in their countries. However, as the aim of SCU is to change the way the world thinks of street children, it is important that we engage with and problematise how they are positioned on a global platform, which is why SCU hold ‘Street Child’ events. In this report, we refer to children who live and work on the street as ‘street-connected’. We do so because we recognise the limitations that the phrase street children has when describing the lived experiences of these children.

Using ‘street children’ more often than not invokes ideas of care or caution as these children are positioned as out-of-place and in need of rescue or deviant and in need of removal (as explained by Balagolopan 2014; Beazley 2014; Shand 2014). Such representations can objectify and limit individual children to specific interpretations of life on the street and a ‘passivity of circumstance’ (Thomas de Benitez 2017). Using the term *street-connected* acknowledges that these children have

agency and experience a variety of situations in which they develop and maintain relationships with and attachments to their families, home and street-connected communities, and the street itself.

For example, street-connected children may be in regular communication with their parents and extended families, they may have no contact with home and rely completely on the street for survival and support, or their situation represents a combination of these (Aptekar and Stoecklin 2014; Rizzini and Butler 2003). Their relative levels of wellbeing and resilience also vary depending on the time they have spent on the street, their age, and their level of education among other factors (Corcoran and Wakia 2013, 2016; Evans 2006).

By referring to a child as connected to the street, we attempt to position them, rather than their situation, at the centre of our thinking (Thomas de Benitez 2017), acknowledging that the connections they make are individualised and constantly changing. It is a child's street-connected identity, constructed as they navigate their lives in connection to the street, that impacts upon how they figure a place for themselves when they physically leave the street and move into family homes and communities (Corcoran 2016).

However, for some Team Leaders – who manage the relationship between their organisation and Street Child United and bring the teams to the event – using 'street-connected' suggests a much wider spectrum of possibilities than the children they work with represent. As they support children who come from the most vulnerable of street-connected communities – who have limited contact with families and spend all of their time on the streets – they prefer to use the phrase 'street child'. Other Team Leaders have commented on how the phrase 'street-connected' can also be difficult to translate into their home languages and the need to educate people about the meaning of the phrase can result in the message being lost when trying to reach a local, national or global audience through the media. The discussions around definitions are therefore ongoing. Such discussions add to the general discourse, hopefully, providing a more nuanced picture of the experiences of street-connected children and the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives.

As Corcoran (2016) and Thomas de Benitez (2017) suggest, street-connectedness describes how the relationships children have with the people and space represented by 'the street' are identity-forming (see also Borg et al. 2012), affecting how they think of themselves and how they interact with others on and away from the street. These interactions can be conducted within cultures of violence, abuse, and neglect, experienced at home, on the street, at work, in school - perpetrated by family members, the community, the police and even the children themselves towards one another (Abdelgalil et al. 2004; Bar-On 1997; Feeny 2005; Jones et al. 2007; Thomas de Benitez 2007).

Such treatment and the resulting stigmatisation for being street-connected can reinforce the children's sense of being out-of-place and not belonging (Corcoran 2016; Corcoran et al. 2020). Street Child United aims to challenge such stigmatisation and empower children to not only feel that they belong, but to ensure that they have the ability to change their future and the futures of other street-connected children – changing the way local and national governments respond to 'street children'.

Changing these perceptions through an international sporting event begins with the children traveling to a new country, which is a challenge in itself when many of them do not have a birth certificate (e.g. Kimotho and Oluoch 2016; UNICEF 2006), let alone a passport when they start on the

journey. Such a journey is exciting, daunting and paradigm changing, and it is important that the children are prepared appropriately, and supported through the process. In addition to the children, the organisations' staff members may not have left the country before either.



3 Research design

“Going to Russia and coming back helped me because I am together with [organisation name] and they are there for me and they support me”

(Player from Team I)

This research project aimed to understand the impact of participating in the Street Child World Cup on the children taking part, the organisations that support their participation and the communities they belong to. This broad aim provided the basis for an exploratory study with two main areas of focus. The first concerned participation in the Street Child World Cup (SCWC) in Moscow, 2018; the second was a retrospective exploration of participation in previous Street Child United events through interviews with team leaders in Moscow who had been to multiple events and the Youth Leaders who had played previously.

3.1 Research questions

Question	Participants	Method
What was the impact of participating in the 2010 and 2014 Street Child World Cups and/or 2016 Street Child games?	Team Leaders	Online questionnaire Face-to-face interviews
Why do organisations choose to take part in the Street Child World Cup?	Team Leaders	Paper-based baseline questionnaire Face-to-face Interviews Focus Groups
Why do children want to take part in the Street Child World Cup? - What are their key motivations?	Players	Group interview
How are players prepared for the Street Child World Cup?	Team Leaders Players	Focus group Group interview
What are children’s experiences of getting ready for the Street Child World Cup? - What are their concerns about participating?	Players	Group interview
What expectations do the children have about what will happen after they return home? - How do they perceive the organisations’ expectations of them? - What are their expectations of themselves? - How do they perceive their communities’ expectations of them?	Players	Group interview in Moscow Group Interviews as part of follow-up field visits. WhatsApp with PL
How do organisations manage the transition of players, and organisation staff members, back to home countries?	Team Leaders	Focus group WhatsApp Face-to-face interviews
What are the key challenges and opportunities experienced by organisations supporting children through this transition?	Team Leaders	WhatsApp Face-to-face interviews
How does the return home affect children’s motivation, reintegration journey, self-esteem, etc.?	Team Leaders Players	WhatsApp Face-to-face interviews

Table 3.1: Key questions to be considered in the research project

For the players, and the organisations that support them, participation in a SCWC event involves three specific periods of time: preparing for the event (i.e. to travel to Moscow); being at the event (i.e. in Moscow); and the transition (back) into communities, when they return to their home country. We devised questions (table 3.1) to provide the framework for an exploration of these periods of time in relation to: a) the SCWC in Moscow; and b) previous participation in SCU events. The questions also helped to decide methods of data generation that would meet the needs of the research context.

We had anticipated that the resulting research project and the related modes of data generation would be conducted in three distinct periods of time: before the event, in Moscow, and after the return to their home countries. However, while these phases effectively describe when the research team conducted data generation, and present a useful framework within which to present the findings in this report, the methods used and the specific questions focused on cannot easily be allocated to a specific phase in Table 2.1 – as we discuss below.

3.2 Phase 1: Preparing for Moscow

In the month before the SCWC in Moscow, all of the organisations bringing teams to the event were sent a baseline questionnaire in Word format. This questionnaire was a requirement for SCU's partner management processes. To avoid inundating the Team Leaders with paperwork, it was decided that in addition to questions required by SCU about the partner organisations, this questionnaire would be adapted to also contain a number of questions concerned with motivations for taking part in the SCWC and information about the children they support.

SCU staff copied and pasted the answers to the questions relevant to the study into an anonymised Excel spreadsheet and forwarded them to the research team. These questions aimed to provide a general overview of the organisations involved in the SCWC, and their motivations for applying to be a SCU partner, without a focus on particular country contexts. We wished to develop a baseline understanding from which we could inform the questions asked during later face-to-face interviews conducted in Moscow.

Twelve organisations had previously fielded teams in the 2010 SCWC, the 2014 SCWC, and/or the 2016 Street Child Games (SCG). We emailed each of the Team Leaders from these organisations with a link to an additional online 'Previous Participation' questionnaire that asked about their experiences of participating in these events, how the players coped with coming home, and any noticeable impact that participating had led to for the organisations. These questions contributed to an understanding of the issues faced during and after these earlier events. The responses informed interview questions with Team Leaders questions focused on the Moscow SCWC, to ascertain the extent to which lessons were being learned and issues either resolved or planned for.

Both of these survey methods were problematic in the lead up to the Moscow SCWC. Many of the organisations fielding the teams are small and a number of staff members were working towards getting the teams ready to leave for the event alongside completing everyday roles and responsibilities. As well as selecting and preparing the teams for the journey to Moscow, and their ongoing football training, staff were also required to complete the paperwork and bureaucratic processes inherent to applying for passports and visas. More information on these processes is included in later sections of this report. In short, Team Leaders were extremely busy getting everything ready for the teams to go to Moscow and understandably, the surveys were not considered to be a priority. As such, just under half of the baseline surveys (n=9) were returned

before the event started and a quarter (n=3) of the Previous Participation questionnaire responses were completed. The remaining baseline questionnaires, which were required by SCU as part of their partner management process, were submitted in the months after the event. To lighten the load on the Team Leaders who had not been able to complete the online questionnaire, they were also asked at the beginning of the face-to-face interviews about their participation at previous events.

3.3 Phase 2: In Moscow

There were three specific groups of participants that the research team gathered data from:

- players;
- Team Leaders
- SCU Youth Leaders – seven young people who had played during previous SCU events and acted as spokespeople for SCU during interactions with various donors/sponsors, government officials, and the media.

As the event itself involved a very busy timetable, the methods used were designed to take as little time as possible during the teams' free timeslots.

Interviewing the players

Originally, we planned to conduct focus group activities with all nine members of a team together. However, it was very difficult to work with this number of players. We conducted focus groups with two teams, who had arrived early in Moscow, and struggled to keep them focused. This was likely a result of being tired after their long flights and excited about the official start of the event. We therefore adapted the plan and conducted group interviews with a maximum of three players, accompanied by a Team Leader or coach who could both act as an interpreter and be on hand to support the players should they require it. We invited members from the first two teams interviewed to join us for a second group interview towards the end of their stay in Moscow to explore the questions we had not been able to answer earlier.

Each interview began with a game of Dobble®. This competitive card game involves picture recognition skills and can be played in any language. The game acted as an icebreaker, enabling participants to feel comfortable within the interview space and get to know the interviewer during a less formal activity. Two or three rounds of the game were played before the interview started. Each interview centred on: preparing to come to Moscow, being in Moscow, and what their expectations were of going home. Our questions were intentionally open-ended, inviting the players to speak at length and uninterrupted. The questions asked included:

- Why did you want to come to the SCWC?
- What was it like preparing to come and what did you have to do to get here?
- How easy was it for you to stay on track?
- Is there anything else you want to tell us about coming to the SCWC?
- What is good about being here at the SCWC?
- Is there anything that you find challenging?
- What do you want to achieve when you return home after the SCWC?
- What would you tell your families, friends and neighbours about the event?
- What kind of support do you expect your organisation to give you after you return?

- What do you think will be the good things about going home?
- What do you think the challenges will be?

Group interviews using these questions were conducted with players from 11 teams in total.

Interviewing Team Leaders and Youth Leaders

All Team Leaders and Youth Leaders were invited to take part in individual face-to-face interviews – with an interpreter when it was required. There were two main aspects of focus for these interviews. The Team Leaders who were new to SCWC events were asked about their motivations for getting involved in the SCWC and their experiences of preparing to come to Moscow. This included the ways in which they selected and prepared the players for the journey and what they planned to do to support their return home. The Team Leaders who had fielded teams in previous events were also asked about their experiences of these events. We wanted to understand the impact of participating on their organisations and the players who participated as well as how they have adapted their preparations for the Moscow SCWC because of their previous experience. The Youth Leaders were asked about what it was like to compete in a SCU event and the effect it has had on their lives in the years since they competed. In total, 12 (out of a possible 24) Team Leaders and five (out of a possible six) Youth Leaders were interviewed in Moscow.

3.4 Phase 3: Following up after the event

In order to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by the players returning home from Moscow, and the organisations supporting them, it was important to develop multiple methods of data generation. Ideally, we wanted to be able to visit each of the 19 teams multiple times over the following 18 months and interview the players face-to-face. However, this was not possible. As an alternative, we followed just one country to provide an in-depth case study. We visited the organisation six times: after one month and then after four, nine, 11, 13, and 17 months. Members of the team were interviewed in the first, second and fourth visit. Staff members who accompanied the team to Moscow were interviewed during all six visits and a young person who had been unable to travel to Moscow because of paperwork issues was interviewed once to understand impact of working towards going but not being able to compete in the event.

In addition to the team focused on as a case study, two players from another country team were interviewed face-to-face in the year following the event, and a third player from a different team again was interviewed twice, as they were able to attend other SCU events in the UK. Each of the interviews conducted in the follow-up phase were semi-structured in nature and lasted a maximum of 30 minutes.

To include data from as many teams as possible, we employed digital methods of data generation. As a number of the teams come from areas with limited or inconsistent connectivity, we required a method of data generation that not only enabled questions to be asked at regular intervals in the months after the SCWC, but also gave the interviewees opportunities to answer the questions in their own time using accessible means - such as mobile phones. The interviews with Team Leaders were mainly conducted asynchronously using WhatsApp, which provided the option of recording spoken answers to questions if they preferred this to typing their answers.

Given the challenges of reaching some of the teams and Team Leaders, we were keen to take advantage of any opportunity to connect with them. For example, in October 2018, SCU held a summit in Cambridge for Team Leaders of organisations fielding teams in the 2019 Street Child Cricket World Cup (SCCWC). This event provided an opportunity to conduct semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the Team Leaders from four of the country teams. In addition, a fifth Team Leader visiting the UK for Christmas 2018 was interviewed.

During the follow-up stages, individual face-to-face and individual and group WhatsApp interviews were conducted with Team Leaders and coaches from seven countries, and individual and group interviews with 12 players from three of these.

3.5 Analysing the data

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the participants involved in the project. We interviewed one or more of the participant groups from 14 countries. The total number of teams is higher than the number of countries and there were some that were represented by both a girls' team and boys' team.

Teams	Team Leader	Players	Youth Leaders	Others
A	1	3		
B	1	2		Coach and assistant team leader
C		1		
D	1	2		
E	1	2		Assistant team leader
F	1		1	
G	1			
H			1	
I	1	3	1	
J	1	9		Coach and assistant team leader
K	1		1	
L	1	9		
M		2	1	Assistant team leader
N	1			
O	1	2		
P	1	2		
Total	13	37	5	6

Table 3.2: Overview of participants involved in the research

The data generated included transcriptions of the audio-recordings of 26 individual interviews and 20 group interviews. The transcripts were thematically analysed. We took an iterative inductive approach (Braun and Clark 2006) as we revisited each transcript and collaboratively categorised and grouped the themes. The resulting umbrella categories were then translated into the subheadings used in this report.

“The Street Child World Cup is all about storytelling – and that is powerful”

Member of staff working with Team C



4 - Preparing for the 2018 SCWC

“What does football mean to you?”

“Everything”

(Extract from interview with players from Team D)

Preparing to participate in an international advocacy event such as the SCWC starts even before an organisation decides to partner with SCU. Organisations have clear motivations behind why they wish to sign up for the event, for both the children and the potential impact on the work they do. Once they have entered into the partnership, there are then various stages of preparation that must be undertaken before the team gets to the event. In this section, we explore both the reasons behind taking part in the SCWC in 2018 and what their preparation – both for the organisations and the children they support.

4.1 Reasons for Coming

There are many reasons why organisations sign up for a SCU event. In the baseline questionnaire, Team Leaders’ responses as to why they had chosen to be involved in the 2018 event could be summarised into four main categories: Advocacy and rights, Awareness and funding, Children’s experience, and Networking opportunities. The quotes are not attributed to a particular team in this section as the research team received the responses to the questions in an anonymised format.

Advocacy and Rights

Advocacy was frequently listed as one of the Team Leaders’ main reasons for wanting to take part in the event. Being involved in the event was seen as an opportunity to advocate and campaign for the rights of street-connected children, both locally and globally, and the struggles they face at both local/national and international levels. Some Team Leaders addressed the opportunities provided to advocate for specific rights such as the right to play and the right to an education. Others wrote about criminalisation and rights violations and how this event would raise awareness of the current policies, which enabled or prevented street-connected children’s rights being upheld in their home countries. Some also saw the event as providing a way to talk about these rights violations in a direct manner and on an international platform. As one Team Leader wrote, it would:

give [the children] a chance to speak in front of a global audience to fight for their rights.

Response to online questionnaire

Awareness and Funding

Team Leaders also reflected on about how the global platform would allow for increased media exposure and awareness of their work. The role of partner non-governmental organisations (NGO) as a gateway to funding opportunities was also highlighted as a benefit of attending the event. The increased visibility and raised consciousness of the country, conditions of street-connected children, and the organisation itself, were also given as reasons for attendance. As well as this, participation

was seen as an opportunity to demonstrate the potential of the children themselves, giving them a spotlight and showing what can be achieved when they are provided with the right support.

Players' Experience

The players' experiences and the perceived confidence and joy they gained from it, was another reason given for participating in the 2018 SCWC. The event was described by Team Leaders as providing the players with a way to express themselves and meet others like them. This was considered as a:

great opportunity to show the children how much potential they have

Response to online questionnaire

and that they matter in the world. As well as emphasising the positive experience for the current players, Team Leaders also spoke about the potential impact for future participants. Players were positioned as potential future role models to show the way that hard work and participation in sport (football in particular), and the programmes delivered by the organisations, could help them achieve certain goals. The children were thus, seen as:

open[ing] the path for hundreds of other children that follow in their stride

Response to online questionnaire

and as demonstrating how the right decisions could lead to future opportunities.

Networking Opportunities

The event was also described as an opportunity to meet with Team Leaders from other countries and explore networking opportunities. While the players were able to develop themselves through the games and teachings of the event, partner organisations saw it as an opportunity to come together – formally and informally – to discuss good practice and share experiences. Organisations were able to develop an understanding of the way other organisations and partners were tackling the issues and challenges faced by street-connected children in their countries. Others described how they perceived the event as providing the chance to gain support – financial and/or knowledge and expertise – to continue their core work.

4.2 What is football?

In addition to understanding why the organisations chose to partner with SCU, it was important to understand why the players themselves wished to take part. Exploring this provided an understanding of the players' hopes and expectations for the event – something that is important when managing its impact. Each group interview with the players in Moscow began with the question 'What does football mean to you?'. This was initially a light-hearted way to ease into the interview but the answers proved more impactful than initially expected, and help articulate the role and importance of football in the lives of these children.

Football brought with it feelings of opportunity, hope and a sense of family. It provided the children with the chance to represent their country and instilled them with a sense of pride and importance. Our conversations on football identified a number of interrelated themes, namely the idea of a bright future, family and friends, and football as a safe space.

For many of the players football represented a better future, and the hope of moving onto something greater. The two players from Team B who were interviewed both connected their futures with football:

my future is bright when I play football

football is giving [me] hope for [a] better future

As well as representing the abstract idea of a bright future, a few players also spoke about the SCWC as the springboard for a career in football, mentioning the possibility of trying out for an international team once they returned home. This is in line with the Team Leaders' view of the event (see section 4.1 above) as a chance for players to explore their potential, and through hard work achieve their goals.

Playing football also gave many of the players a sense of connection and family through the relationships they built with the other players on their teams. As this member of Team I wrote:

The team is our family, we have a family.

This sentiment was shared by players and Youth Leaders from other teams:

It's a second home to them, when they're with their family, their friends

Team N player through translator

To be part of a team, is not like you are alone.

Youth Leader from Team I

Football therefore was not seen just as either competitive or pure sporting endeavour, it was also valued by the players as a space where significant familial relationships could be formed. As a player from Team A explained:

Soccer is not only about playing games [...] there is friendship and family in being part of a team

As shown by the quotes above, many of the players involved consider their fellow team members as family. Football goes beyond a game and instead becomes a place where strong supportive relationships are formed. The teams speak about eating together, playing together and generally helping each other out:

If you don't help each other there is no team

Player, Team I

A player from Team M when asked what it feels like to be part of a team:

Very happy. Pride

The pride of being part of a team and the close relationships fostered between the players was a central part of why football (and by extension participation in the event) was seen as so important to them.

As well as creating relationships within the team, many players spoke about football acting as a vehicle for making friends with members from other country teams. With football as a starting point they were able to form connections, and come together to discuss their shared experiences. There was a sense of realisation (and sometimes surprise) among the players that they were street-connected children in other countries. They described football as a way to bring people together and its potential as way of meeting others was cited as a key motivator for taking part.

In addition to providing a space for the formation of close relationships, football was also described as a space of safety for the players - providing both a way to channel their emotions and a place of calm away from their day-to-day lives. The players described football as bringing them a sense of peace when they were depressed and down and as providing an outlet when they were angry. The act of playing football made them happy; and emotion that was further exaggerated when they won a game. More generally, football was described as a distraction which helped “*take their minds off things*”, giving them an outlet outside of their personal circumstances.

Overall, it was clear that for the players, football holds a multiplicity of meanings beyond just the game itself. It provided a safe space where they can express themselves as well as a distraction from their lives at home and on the street. Being a part of team helped to create a sense of family among the players and opportunities to meet other players was a key motivator to be involved in the event. Finally, football was seen as providing hope and a better future, as well as possibly opening up opportunities and changing their lives.

4.3 Preparing the Team

There is no one size fits all to how organisations work with street-connected children (e.g. see EENET 2017 for a focus on the different ways that education programmes are delivered). It is therefore, unsurprising that there are many different ways for organisations to prepare their teams for an event like the SCWC. Each organisation will endeavour to incorporate such a programme, or not, into their existing schedules of work. This can have both positive and negative impact on the organisations and the players. Here we explore the processes of team selection and preparation, focusing on what the players are required to do in practice. In the next section, we focus on the organisational processes – i.e. preparing the paperwork – that are also part of the process.

Team selection was to some extent determined by the organisations’ ways of working. For example, teams F and B held a series of trials, one from centres run by the organisation (which has a national reach), the other holding open trials to players from a number of organisations who also deliver programmes in the same geographical area of the country. In the case of the latter, the players’ temperaments and whether they would get more out of the journey in terms of confidence and their ability to cope with the challenges of coming back home afterwards was also a selection criteria, while the former selected purely on talent. Team A and J recruited players directly from the streets as that is where their programmes of intervention are mainly focused. Team L recruited players from children they were already supporting but they were chosen because of how they

represented the values of the organisation and not their sporting talent. Therefore, the different organisations recruited children to the teams because they were the best players, the best advocates, and/or those who they felt would get the most out of the experience.

Some of the Team Leaders were concerned about the ways in which the different selection methods affected fair play.

Because we work with young people on the streets, we first have to get them from the streets and then try to train them in a three-month period - it is quite a challenge compared to the other teams [representing countries at the SCWC].

Assistant Team Leader, Team J

As this Assistant Team Leader suggests, a number of country teams were only put together in the months leading up to the event itself, while other countries, because of the size of the organisation or the particular interventions they deliver, fielded teams that have known each other and played together for much longer. Team Leaders concerned with a perceived lack of fair play emphasised how they were at a disadvantage because players had only been selected in the months before the event, and in some instances – especially in the case of some girls’ teams – had only picked up a football for the first time at that point. They referred to other teams that were put together by organisations running long-term institutional care, in which the children had lived with each other for some time and were therefore used to each other and trained with together regularly. In addition, there were organisations that ran multiple centres across a whole country or province who could therefore choose players from a larger pool of talent. SCU’s philosophy is that winning is marginal to the wider importance of participation. However, a number of Team Leaders and coaches gave the impression that they were there to win, which was reflected in their team selection methods and commented on by other Team Leaders in their interviews. For one Team Leader, there was the additional issue of some of these more experienced players also being of larger build, playing more aggressively, and making injury more likely for teams with players who were of a much smaller stature.

Therefore, given the pool of young people in each country who were selected from for the games, there are multiple ways in which these young people were prepared to take part in the SCWC. The Team Leaders for teams F, A and J all described how their involvement in the SCWC was part of a larger programme of work and a commitment to the young people who they fielded at the event.

Street Child United does not end here. It [is] a pre-, during, and post programme

Team Leader, Team A

Consequently, the SCWC cannot be seen as an isolated event. The various programmes of preparation that were organised in advance of the journey to Moscow provide an insight into the support structures that were put in place for the players before they left their countries – and for those who were not lucky enough to make the final cut.

Team F brought their final shortlist (a few of whom did not make the final team) together for a multi-week camp in which they trained together as a team, as well as attending classes in various subjects such as human and child rights advocacy and mental preparation for their journey ahead. Team L put together a shortlist of players who most embodied the values and the ethos of the

organisation they were representing, thinking of how they would be able to act as role models when they returned home after the event. Team J recruited from the streets, five months before the event, bringing a number of children into their centre to begin their reintegration¹ programme at the same time as the preparation for Moscow. In this instance, a trip to Russia was a motivating factor for leaving the street. For the vast majority of teams, the final team was subject to paperwork, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The selection of the teams and the challenges involved prior to the SCWC are an important part of the experience for both the players and the organisations involved. The reasons the players felt they had been chosen offer insight and understanding into how they viewed their selection and participation. The impact of being chosen to be part of the team was a big part of the SCWC experience for many of the players, affecting how they viewed themselves. The reasons they gave for being selected seemed to reflect their understanding of the event and their perceptions of the organisations' selection criteria. When asked about why they had been chosen the players highlighted a variety of reasons. Many spoke about "good qualities" as a reason, this being anything from their football ability or behaviour, to good performance in school. On the other hand, some felt they had been chosen purely based on their football talent. Others on the fact they were street-connected children and this was who the event was for. Depending on the country, some also felt faith and religion had played a role. We will explore these more in the following paragraphs.

Those who viewed the event with a focus on the competitive element felt they were chosen because they were good at football and more talented than the other children:

because this quality in himself and he has good [football] ability

Team E player through translator

Comments like this reflect how the Team Leaders spoke about and set up their team selection process. Those who allowed many children to be involved, while making them aware that only certain individuals would be selected for team, gave the players the impression that they were being chosen. This feeling of meant a lot to the players and in some cases influenced the way in which they viewed themselves. As one player from Team B said:

If they pick me for a team, I am lucky, and they think I am a good person, that's why

This does raise the question of how organisations manage the disappointment of not being chosen. The Team Leader of team F, explained that the camp programme they conducted in the weeks before the event, was described to the children participating as providing the greatest impact. They wanted those who stayed behind to feel that they had benefitted just as much as the players who journeyed to Moscow.

While some players believe they were selected for their football talent – others said they were chosen because of their effort and/or good performance in school or their respectful attitude, and good behaviour in general:

¹ Reintegration programmes are usually focused on supporting young people to leave the street and to either reconcile with family, access alternative care, or live independently. These programmes often involve non-formal education to prepare the children for going (back) into formal education and/or training.

We were chosen because our performing in school, our behaviour, and also the knowledge we have on playing football.

Player, Team K

Respect, and they were working very hard.

Team D player through translator

We did not directly ask the players whether the organisations had explained to them about the selection process. However, their responses to why they think they were chosen may reflect how the selection process was described to the players by the organisations. For example, some of the Team Leaders spoke about choosing players on the basis of their re-engagement into education or good behaviour.

For children from countries with a stronger religious background, participation was often framed in a religious manner and selection seen as a result of God's will. One Team K player acknowledged that their football talent was what had allowed them to participate but that they felt this talent was: *"a gift from God"*. Another from Team I felt that the fact that being chosen for the team at all was: *"an opportunity from God"*. For these players, their participation was not immediately equated with the result of hard work or good behaviour but instead as part of *"Gods plan"* (player, Team J).

Other players also felt they were chosen based on their *"street experience"* - simply the fact that they were street-connected:

She says she's here because of her background, maybe to share her experience, because she has had street experience and a vulnerable life.

Team I player through a translator

because I am a street child

Player, Team B

In this way, the players seemed very aware that they were attending an event for children like them and who shared their experiences and background. There were, however, players from some teams who felt that they did not fit under the 'street child' description and in these cases they wondered why they were representing their country in an event that talked about street children. This was particularly the case for players being brought to the event by organisations that worked with children in care or at risk of becoming homeless. However, whether the selection process was focused on their talent and football ability, or their behaviour and performance in other settings, the players all seemed to have a very clear idea of why they had been chosen and how this tied in to their expectations of the event.

While the players seem to have formed clear ideas on why they were selected the reality was that in many cases the choice of team was much more dependent on logistics than any of the reasons given above. The next section describes some of these challenges and how they affected the players involved.

4.4 Challenges – Documents and Disapproval

The partner organisations faced many challenges while preparing the teams to travel to the SCWC and these had direct impacts on which children were able to attend. Two main challenges highlighted are issues with documentation and the challenge of parental approval.

While the players had a very clear idea of why they had been chosen to participate the reality of selection was affected by logistical challenges faced by the organisations supporting them. While Team Leaders expressed a desire to select players based on factors such as:

their own abilities, their wishes to play football

Team Leader, Team O

the reality was much more complex. In countries where there were difficulties with passports and other legal documents and papers required to travel, players were chosen on the basis of who had the required paperwork already, or who could acquire these easily. One Team Leader spoke about how they had to take the children before a judge if they were to be allowed to take them overseas. They had to apply to the court for permission, which required a good deal of paperwork, including parental permissions. This ultimately affected the sample from which they recruited the players:

There was a lot of bureaucratic stuff involved there, so in the end we had to choose girls who didn't have any contact with their parents, the girls who had birth certificates...

Team Leader, Team O

The team was essentially drawn from those who had no contact with parents as this reduced the overall paperwork burden and the reliance on parents to complete forms and turn up to meetings. As they had experienced issues before with parents not turning up, they did not want their non-attendance at the court to affect the legal process.

The decisions made by the organisation fielding Team O are not surprising when we explore the experiences of the organisation responsible for recruiting for Team J. Convincing parents of the importance of their cooperation to obtain paperwork was not always easy. Birth certificates and passports need parental permission. Some parents did not believe that their children were going to a football tournament. Others, whose child was on the street in a different town, for example, had not seen their child for so long that they wondered why they were needed at a particular meeting. This led to many missed appointments when parents failed to turn up to government offices etc. As a result of the delays created by parents not turning up for meetings with local officials when they were asked to, Team J was comprised of the first nine players who had their documentation in place. Even when they had the paperwork for the team, the staff then had to negotiate with the authorities to be able to take them out of the country and only received the finalised paperwork on the day of their flight. Situations like this often meant that despite their initial aim – to select players who were role models, talented at football or who they believed would benefit from going – the organisations had to select those who were able to practically attend the event.

Team Leaders spoke about how tough it was to tell children that they could not attend based on there being no paperwork. The struggle of telling children who had worked hard and wanted to attend, but could not because of practical reasons was a challenging experience. Speaking to a young

man who did not make it into the case study team after the event, he described his disappointment, but also blamed himself to some extent:

At first I did not believe I was going to Russia so I delayed. When I realised I could go I started late so I did not get the passport in time

Player not selected to join case study team

Getting paperwork together was an issue across all the countries. As Team J describe, working with parents to obtain the necessary paperwork can be problematic. In addition to parents not investing their time into the process of obtaining the necessary legal documentation, a number of Team Leaders and players talked about parental disapproval. This disapproval was concerned with either their involvement in the SCWC – and the potential dangers that their child(ren) faced – or their playing football when it was not perceived as a route to future work or it was against cultural norms.

Parental disapproval was a challenge that the players had to directly overcome to participate in the event. One player from Team I (through a translator), spoke about how her brothers tried to discourage her from playing football because of her gender:

...the brothers in her family because at the beginning they were discouraging her and saying: "you can't play football, football is something to be done by boys and not girls and you can't make it by the way"

She spoke of how she had to plead with her mother to attend and eventually was able to convince her. This player's experiences motivated her to ensure that other girls do not experience similar barriers in the future. She felt that her experiences in Moscow were important and she had learned lessons that she wanted to discuss with her community. She was expecting to take on an ambassador role after returning to her country and felt that enabling similar opportunities for other girls was a priority.

The girls of Team A faced similar opposition from their parents and the wider community. Within their community, the first obstacle is being able to play football, as it is not a sport that is traditionally associated with girls. Therefore, the Team Leader explained that as an organisation offering many sports-based programmes, they work closely with parents to overcome the disapproval they face from the community and advocate the benefits of girls playing games such as football. Within this organisation's wider programmes of support for street-connected children, and those living in informal settlement communities, sport provided the motivation for the children to attend the centres and engage in the non-formal education programmes they deliver.

Parental disapproval of football was evident in the responses from other teams too, and for both boys' and girls' teams. These children faced opposition from their parents, who did not believe that football was a worthwhile endeavour.

..my dad did not support me. He's angry. "Why you play football?" It's a rubbish game. No money from football

Player, Team I

Given the additional challenges that families posed in relation to taking a team to the SCWC, the organisation fielding Team A took the decision to involve the parents in the selection process right

from the beginning. As the Team Leader explained, this helped them to both ensure parents' support as well as managing parents' expectations of the event:

We have a meeting with parents before even before the selection process to ensure that they can be part of the training, parents are aware of the assessment and what happens if they do or don't get selected other criteria. It is not about getting the team that will play the best but the group who are able to deal with the event with maturity and build on it to their advantage...we explain to parents that we are a charity and try our best and therefore parents cannot expect money and can't hold us responsible for accidents. We will give them our word that we will do for the best but can't be responsible for accidents and no claims against us and this is just not just about the event but also the future...there is a declaration form to sign and the parents do so accordingly. The journey means risks and they know that their child will visit. One parent didn't sign for some time saying that something will happen, understanding the project leaders are at risk also....

The Team Leader developed a system of meetings and home visits to keep the parents informed, allay any fears they might have, and challenge their expectations of financial gain. The families and communities that the players from Team A belong to are unlikely to have experienced travel beyond their city or province, let alone obtain a passport for international travel. In this community, and in the communities from which some of the other teams were recruited, there is the perception that traveling to another country means you return more wealthy than when you left. Parents therefore expect there to be benefits from letting their children travel to the event. In addition, their fear of the unknown could also lead to problems.

Even though the Team Leader from Team A ensured that the parents were involved and informed throughout the process, parents would be swayed by members of the wider community who would warn them of the potential dangers of letting their children go to the event. As the Team Leader explained:

Even though we went through the training and then training the guardians, the girls would still be influenced by the community e.g. parents being told by the communities if they go the girls will be spoilt or abused etc. or the place would be too risky.

The organisation fielding Team A had sent teams to a number of SCWC events. The Team Leader had therefore used their experiences of previous events, and the challenges they faced when preparing the players for the journey, to develop a programme of working with parents. Once the potential positive impact of the training and the event was clear, the parents of the players grew to support them and encouraged their continued involvement in the SCWC, and the wider sports programmes delivered by the organisation.

Alternatively, the Team Leader for Team O explained that as the process of dealing with parents was difficult, especially in terms of getting their support, permission, and assistance to prepare the paperwork (e.g. birth certificates, passports and visas) only players who had no contact with their parents at all were chosen for the team. This restricted the pool of available players – limiting the opportunities for other children that could have been chosen – and also required that the organisation go to court for legal permission to take them out of the country. This is an interesting example, given that it showcases how dealing with bureaucratic red tape in this instance is preferred to finding and dealing with parents. This organisation runs institutional care for the vast majority of the children it supports, and therefore delivers a programme model that does not necessarily

require parental input, whereas other organisations fielding teams prioritise the reintegration of children with their families or other family-based care. In this latter instance, there is no choice but to deal with parents.

4.5 Summary

In summary, the players involved felt that football represented more than simply a game to them, offering the prospect of a bright future, the chance to build family within their team and a safe space and outlet away from their everyday lives. To be chosen for the team was a key part of their experience and in some cases impacted on the way they thought about themselves, their abilities, behaviour and self-worth, often providing a positive self-image. This is in contrast to the selection process from the perspective of the organisations, which was often constrained by practicalities, with legal difficulties acquiring documents being a major challenge. The players themselves also faced opposition from parents, which could prevent their attendance at or involvement in the event if organisations had not developed a system of working with parents to garner their support.



5. Being at the event in Moscow

“It will change their lives...no it has already changed their lives”

(Team Leader, team O)

In Moscow, players and/or Team Leaders representing 16 teams (14 countries) were interviewed about their experiences. The interviews explored their journeys to Moscow from the moment they were first put forward for selection to leaving for home at the end of the event. In addition, the players and Team Leaders who were interviewed in the follow up stages of the project were asked to reflect on these experiences again before we focused on how they settled in to their daily lives again post-event. Thematic analysis of the data focused on the players’ time in Moscow and emergent themes around the opportunities and challenges they experienced in Moscow were identified. These opportunities and challenges include: their culture shock and feeling overwhelmed initially; their positive experiences of food and accommodation; how they experienced travel and culture; the friendships they developed; and their self-esteem.

5.1 Positive Experiences

As is often the case when exploring children’s experiences, there is never a one-size fits all response. Just as there were teams who found the food challenging, there were others who felt that it was a highlight of the event; as well as the accommodation, making new friends, having the opportunity to travel and experience new cultures, food was a major positive in the players’ interview responses.

For the players who felt it was worth mentioning, the food and accommodation they were provided with in Moscow was noted as being significantly different to their typical life experiences in their home countries. It was not always described positively – for example, some of the players struggled to sleep in the hotel beds – but food was described frequently.

...so like eating everyday, choosing which food she wants to eat on the menus has been the best experience.

Team I player through translator

In contrast to what they expect at home, having a choice of what to eat is only associated with special occasions – especially in relation to being able to eat meat. Members of teams I, J and K all mentioned how they were able to eat meat – especially chicken, which is the more expensive option where they come from – with every meal. It was also a recurring theme in the follow up interviews with the case study team in particular, as they kept referring back to the food that:

you didn’t have to pay for it, you just went to the counter and filled your plate.

This gave rise to an additional issue of explaining that this was not how people usually lived in Moscow and the food had been paid for in advance – just that they did not see the transaction taking place. As the players and/or their Team Leaders explained, at home in the countries represented by I, J and K, the players, their families and others from their communities would be lucky to get meat at Christmas/Eid as it is expensive.

The accommodation was also a potentially positive aspect of the SCWC in Moscow with a number of the teams, e.g.:

The way the bed is with the mattress, she sleeping in a way, she very relaxed waking up in the morning and she feels well so is different, in our homes where we don't use mattresses most of the kids just usually sleep on a carpet on the floor.

Team I player through translator

When asked to choose the most impactful aspect of the event so far, the responses made by the players, the Team Leaders, and Youth Leaders, were split between the friendships they made with each other and the opportunity they had to travel to a new country and experience new cultures.

I met new people from different cultures and I travelled to a country very different from my own

Player, Team D

The fact that he had the opportunity to play and mix with other cultures was incredible...

Team N Youth Leader through translator

It's a dream to be able to travel to another country which I think she never thought she would

Team I player through translator

The SCWC gave players, Team Leaders, and other staff members, opportunities that would not potentially have been possible otherwise. For many of the players, and some of the staff accompanying them, they were the first person in their family and wider community to have travelled outside of their country. It also exposed them to people from other countries, the host country included. A salient theme common to the vast majority of interviews with Team Leaders and players was around the issue of friendship – from the relationships they developed with the other members of their team to the new friends they made in Moscow. The players in particular, mentioned the importance that they placed on being part of a team and the friendships they developed with their peers:

When he plays as part of a team, he is happy because they can play together and when they play together, they can respect each other.

Team E player through translator

Their new friends, from the other teams competing at the event, were also an important aspect of their time in Moscow.

The came to know other people from other countries and to build some friendships with them.

Team I player through translator

...getting up every morning and meeting all the people that they know and their new friends.

Team Leader from Team L

He feels that the best is the friendship he gets, the first is that he enjoys knowing people and he would like that when he goes back, he goes back to our country and he can stay in touch.

Team J player through translator

Such friendships contributed to the players' positive experiences of the SCWC. Making friends was important as it provided them with a sense of belonging to their own teams and a wider 'global' community, acceptance, and an understanding that there were players from other countries who shared similar experiences to them. Hearing stories from each other was important and helped them to see that the problems they faced crossed cultures – giving them confidence that they were not alone:

Just seeing my girls having contact with others that have been in violent situations – it has been a shock but at the same time has helped them.

Team Leader, Team O

He never thought that they would also have problems very similar to the same problems that he had in his country...I think the highlight was to be exposed to their problems as well.

Team N player through translator

Despite the challenges that they faced in their own country, opportunities at the SCWC such as the Congress (which focused on the development of advocacy messages that players wanted to share at the General Assembly) gave the players space and confidence to reflect upon them. Hearing how the problems they experience were similar to those of others in different parts of the world, helped them to look beyond their problems and to focus on their future. The Congress enabled a process of shared reflection and an opportunity to visualise potential solutions to their problems as they developed the messages they co-authored to present at the General Assembly.

Self-esteem was the final theme of particular importance to the participants. As well as developing friendships and understanding how they fit into a larger community of young people from different countries, the general ethos of the event helped them to feel more positive about themselves. The players were the centre of attention – positively supported, welcomed and celebrated. The respect they had from SCU staff and volunteers at the event was a key part of that.

He likes the volunteers and the staff of SCU who actually made him feel very comfortable and taught him so many new things that he's never learned before or experienced before. So he's very thankful to the SCU and the staff and volunteers for giving him that respect.

Team B player through translator

For some of the players this respect came as a surprise:

She was coming here and thought that for us we don't look like local people, we don't know things, we don't have exposure and she thought we would be treated differently from other children and maybe the children from the developed countries would be treating them differently. But it's different, she experienced something positive, all the children are the same, nobody's treating other children differently they are just happy to experience this.

Team I player through translator

Experiencing the respect and equality described in the quote above, no matter how unexpected it was, emphasises how being part of the SCWC could positively affect how the players thought of themselves. Participation in the event developed the confidence of many of the players – from the process of being selected as a member of the team that represented their country, to preparing for the event, and being able to play at the SCWC, their self-esteem improved. The SCWC therefore, plays a role in changing the players' perceptions of themselves.

One of the girls when we were training was the goal keeper, but she was really afraid and said she couldn't play and didn't want to be at fault, but in this tournament the other goalkeeper got injured so I talked with her and told her it has to be you as we don't have another option – so she realised it was for the team and that we are here we need to play so she played as the goal keeper and she did really great and she overcame the fear that she had in training. Now she is more confident and more empowered.

Team Leader, Team O

In general, the interviews with the players provided a positive overview. The Team Leaders felt that these positive experiences contributed to developing a strong basis from which they could move forward. As one Team Leader explained, being part of the event cannot change the reality the players face every day, but it was an important factor in helping them to overcome the risks they face in their day-to day lives:.

...being here, unfortunately won't change totally the reality, it's not a magic trick, it is not an immediate transformation in their lives, but this moment should serve to strengthen them to face the barriers they still have when coming back home.

Team Leader, Team N

5.2 Challenges

One of the main challenges that the participants discussed was a sense of being overwhelmed (i.e. experiencing jetlag, being tired and not having time to process current experience) as well as the culture shock they experienced (i.e. missing home, food, and experiencing language barriers). Travelling long distances to get to Moscow, had an impact on the players, as one Team Leader reflected:

The challenges are that we are really far from home! My team is still in jetlag mode.

Team Leader, Team O

The distances that the players travelled, sometimes over 6000 miles, left them struggling with jetlag as they tried to acclimatise at the same time as actively participating in the various activities on offer. Given the short timescale of the event, there was a limited lead in time between arriving in Russia to getting involved. The schedule of activities for the SCWC was tightly packed and as such it could be overwhelming for those who were already tired. One team leader, who had been to a previous SCWC, felt that there needed to be more breaks in the day. They commented:

...find it a bit tiring, it is the usual story, too many things and sometimes they would just like time to breathe, just relax...

Team Leader M, Team M

A second major challenge that the players experienced whilst in Moscow, was culture shock as they had to adapt very quickly to different ways of doing things. Food in particular was an issue for a number of teams. Teams who were used to more flavourful and spicy cuisine felt that the meals were very bland:

...another really important thing, they miss their home cooking, they miss the food from their country.

Team Leader, Team M

The purchase of chilli sauce as an accompaniment made the food more palatable for some of the teams, but others were looking forward to going home so they could eat ‘good food’ again. There were teams who were impressed by the cuisine – which was discussed earlier – and others who liked it. For vegetarians, the choice of food on the buffet was limited. Regardless of how they felt about the food, it was an important part of the players’ experience of the event, and when it was not appealing it added to an element of culture shock.

Communication and language barriers also contributed to culture shock and it was mentioned by players and Team Leaders as one of the most common challenges that they faced., especially if the players had to rely on adults to translate conversations and help them build relationships with other players for example.

...the language barrier between the children

Team Leader, Team D

The most difficult thing is he (the young person) was not able to communicate with people that easily

Team J player through translator

...they couldn't speak the language, but could get by with sign language

Team Leader, Team D

This last quote demonstrates that although the players experienced difficulty in communicating with each other, they were able to overcome some of these issues by being creative and using sign language. In addition, a number of teams had smartphones and made use of translation-based applications that could help them to talk to each other.

The overall experience of being in Moscow was a positive one for the majority of the players, but there were a small number of one-off disagreements and incidents that occurred between individuals from different teams – both on and off the pitch – that were mentioned by Team Leaders. One of these incidents, which we will not detail in full here because of confidentiality issues, was described by two Team Leaders as a racist, physical altercation between two players and was mentioned in relation to how these Team Leaders were reconsidering their relationships with SCU. They were concerned that the incidents were not dealt with as seriously as they would have preferred – raising concerns about the safeguarding procedures that were in place.

5.3 Summary

In summary, the players, Team Leaders, and the Youth Leaders present the children’s experiences of the SCWC as being largely positive. They outline how the respect they receive from the SCWC community and the friendships they develop contribute to a greater sense of self-esteem and confidence. There were negative aspects to the experience, such as a lack of time to overcome the jetlag and participate in a very busy schedule of activities, but the positives generally outweighed the negative experiences of the event.

Could you please state why you want to take part in the SCWC?

Great experience for the participating players, who others can then look up to as a way to travel through football, and achieve certain goals and dreams through the sport and hard work.

Baseline Questionnaire response



6 Returning Home

“[When we go home] we need to burst the bubble responsibly”

(Team Leader, Team D)

Team Leaders from 10 countries and Youth Leaders from four countries reflected upon the impact of being part of previous SCWC events when they were interviewed in Moscow or as part of the online questionnaire focused on previous participation. In addition, Team Leaders from seven countries, and players representing three countries, were interviewed in the 18 months after the event about their experiences of returning home from the 2018 SCWC. This section explores the different ways in which impact was described during their interviews and pays particular attention to the case study team who were followed, and regularly interviewed, over an 18-month period. In this section, we have chosen not to identify the teams with letters as we have done previously in the report, to ensure that the anonymity of the players is more secure – especially given the detail provided by the case study team.

6.1 Expectations and Responsibilities

As discussed in Section 4, there are many reasons why organisations choose to become partners of SCU and field teams at a SCWC event, and many of these relate to the players’ experiences and the potential benefits to them of participating. In reflecting on the impact of previous SCU events, the Team Leaders who responded to the online survey provided a brief overview of why they were taking part again, as well as the potential impact for the players, and, as the first quote below suggests, the Team Leaders themselves:

See how children themselves are enjoying to meet other children around the world, happy to see children changing the image adults use to have on street-connected children. Meet new people who have the same passion as me.

Response to online questionnaire

Children were happy to explore new opportunities, playing different games.

Response to online questionnaire

The children were confident to carry on their legacy project, different authorities were able to listen to their stories and recognize their role in community changing.

Response to online questionnaire

Children now play a big role in our daily activities, all we do must be focused on their propositions.

Response to online questionnaire

Therefore, there were Team Leaders who had been to SCU events prior to the 2018 SCWC who were clear about the benefits of bringing the children they support to an international sporting event. SCU wanted to know about how the event, and in particular the Congress, impacted on the players’ knowledge of human rights, so this was asked along with the questions focused on perceived benefits. The responses from the questionnaire were mixed:

Indeed, children have understood that they have rights that protect them.

Response to online questionnaire

No. The conference was shallow and had no impact on the kids. The kids had a deeper understanding of the concepts already. Team Leaders are still not utilized in deepening the topic knowledge.

Response to online questionnaire

The 'conference' mentioned in the last quote above, and the one below, predated the current 'Congress' programme that was first developed at the 2016 Street Child Games (SCG) and further developed for the 2018 SCWC. Although they are both referring to the 2014 SCWC these two quotes provide an interesting point from which to start looking at the impact of the Congress and whether it has evolved to provide the forum for developing the players' knowledge of human rights that the conference was critiqued for not providing.

In terms of development for the kids on a personal level, however, this was extremely limited due to the poor quality of the conference (many kids opted to skip it after seeing the first day). At times, the message is condescending and very limited. "I am somebody" - of course you are, then what? There is no long-term plan or vision, and the intense pressure on the kids can have a big effect.

Response to online questionnaire

Although the questionnaire, and interviews with Team Leaders who had been to previous SCU events were mainly positive about the perceived benefits of the SCWC, a couple of Team Leaders were extremely candid about the problems they had preparing their teams for these previous events and for 2014 in particular. One described how they had told the players what an amazing experience it would be, "*the chance of a lifetime*", and for 12 days they were told they were 'somebody'. But when they returned home, life returned to normal. It was difficult for the players to cope with the transition and many of them dropped back to the street. While this may not have prevented them from accessing further support from the organisation who took them to Rio de Janeiro for the SCWC, the children may have disengaged and/or excluded themselves from accessing this support. As Corcoran (2016) found in her research in Kenya, street-connected children can feel ashamed of themselves for dropping out of school and/or returning to the street: they can for example, migrate to the street in a different town or they stay, but try to avoid the social workers who carry out street work. Other Team Leaders had similar issues with players finding the transition difficult after the 2014 event and dropping back to the street.

Two Team Leaders mentioned the problems associated with players' egos. The first described how the team returned with an inflated sense of their importance, which posed problems with how they then related to the organisation and their parents.

The boys weren't prepared that much and something happened - not big - but children were given gifts and money and stopped listening to their parents. Some of them were demanding "I want to do this" and misbehaving.

The second Team Leader explained how one player was asked not to attend programmes delivered by the partner organisation that was supporting them, because their "*new sense of importance*" was

creating friction with the other children being supported. A third Team Leader described how difficulties with family and in education motivated one player to drop back to the street a few months after returning home from Rio, and how in conversation with another staff member from the organisation they said: *“I represented my country in Rio, my life will never be as good as it was then”*. These words highlight the expectations of change and impact that the event had inspired and the need for effective support both as the players transition home and in the months that follow.

Furthermore, not all the teams consisted of players from just one organisation, which created additional complexities to providing such support. Two Team Leaders who fielded teams of children selected from multiple organisations in 2014, commented on how difficult it was to support the players, who found going home to be problematic, when they did not have responsibility for them afterwards. They described issues faced by particular individuals (which we will not detail here to ensure anonymity) and the difficulties of enabling support when the young person was not in their direct care. This was especially problematic when the organisation supporting the young person in practice had not sent any staff members to the event. Having not attended the event the staff would struggle to understand the impact completely, having not been there to see what the experience entailed. A Team Leader who accompanied such a mixed team in 2014, highlighted how the staff at the other organisation had not have left their own country at all and therefore would be unable to comprehend the nature of the experience.

All of the Team Leaders who described the need to better prepare the players for the SCWC, after their experiences of trying to support teams returning from previous events, took different approaches to preparing them for 2018. One chose to only select players from the children supported by their organisation. A second retained the selection from multiple organisations, but created a more structured pre- and post- event programme of preparation and support for the players. Three Team Leaders specifically detailed how the selection of teams and the preparation process for 2018 had been adapted. There was more emphasis on getting the balance correct between selecting a team to play football, choosing children whose lives would be meaningfully changed by being part of the event, and ensuring that the players understood that participation was not going to change their lives overnight. Rather, participation at the SCWC was described as an opportunity to travel and meet new people and that afterwards they would be returning home. These Team Leaders were also keen to establish that any long-term change for the players, especially in regard to their own lives, was up to the children themselves to work towards – but that the organisations were there to support them.

A number of the Team Leaders conducted a camp in the weeks before the 2018 event to prepare the players for Moscow. For one Team Leader, this camp was extremely important as it enabled them to ‘build the team’ when they were selecting players from multiple organisations, but it was also part of a process that would continue in-country after the SCWC was over. Another Team Leader, who was critical of the legacy aspect of the earlier 2014 SCWC, wanted to ensure that participation in Moscow provided the long-term change for the players they recruited this time around. This was especially important as there were players at the camp who did not end up going with the final team for various reasons, such as a lack of paperwork or other players being better suited.

In general, the camps run by organisations involved the players who would travel to Moscow as well as other players who had been shortlisted, but not selected for, the final squad. Some Team Leaders used the camp to deliver a human rights curriculum that would feed into the Congress element of

the SCWC as well as providing the grounding for long-term work with the players. These Team Leaders described the focus on rights as something that they do anyway, but they changed the mode of delivery to tie it in with the SCWC preparation. For two teams, the process of preparing the players to go to Moscow was the start of a year-long programme with the players that included a number of children who did not make the final cut. And a third Team Leader described how the programme delivered before going to Moscow was the foundation for the advocacy work that the team would get involved in after the event.

However, not all the teams had the time, or the staff capacity to develop such a comprehensive programme of preparation and follow-up in 2018. For example, as mentioned earlier, one Team Leader recruited players directly from the street a few months before the event and while a second recruited from those already supported by the organisation two months before leaving for Moscow, they had not played football prior to their selection. In both cases, priorities focused on getting the teams trained up to play football together. In addition, the players recruited directly from the street were also taken through the initial stages of the organisation's reintegration programme. There were, therefore, a variety of ways in which players were selected for their teams and prepared for their time in Moscow, as well as the methods that were used to support the players after they had returned to their home countries.

6.2 Bursting the bubble responsibly

During the SCWC in Moscow, the project leaders took part in a workshop in which they shared with each other their plans for returning home. SCU recognised the issues that players had experienced in previous events, and provided opportunities for the organisations to reflect upon the need for effective support systems and to encourage them to develop their own – both in the summit for Team Leaders that took place in Moscow in July 2017 and at the SCWC itself in 2018. The workshop, held towards the end of the 12-day event in Moscow, 2018, aimed to again reiterate the need to consider the challenges that the players would face when they returned to their home countries. The title of this section of the report came from a Team Leader, who felt that they had to ensure that they, as responsible adults and accountable organisations, must *“burst the bubble responsibly”*. For example, by providing as supportive a process as possible as players leave the highs of being the centre of attention, and the very strong emotional ties that they would develop with the place and the other people they met, at the event and during their time in Moscow. But what did that mean in practice?

Five Youth Leaders, who had been players at previous SCU events, were interviewed about how their participation had impacted their lives since. Some managed the transition better than others. At one end of the spectrum was the Youth Leader who described how returning home was a *“big shock”* and they struggled to transition back in to normal life. They described how it took time to settle back in at home and how the support from the Team Leader was what had helped them through. Eventually, they decided to return to full-time education. Having something to focus on, and working towards their future, gave them the motivation not to follow the majority of their teammates who returned to the street. According to the Team Leader, most of the 2014 team are still on the street. This Team Leader was one of those who had changed their approach to preparing the Team for 2018, and was clear that the event would be an opportunity only, and not a life changing one. At the other end of the spectrum was a player who competed in 2010 and who wanted to build on their experiences of going to South Africa, and being involved in other SCU activities in Brazil and the UK,

to inspire other young people. They had qualified as a social worker and were working with street-connected children directly. He was therefore having a direct impact on building the aspirations of young people in his community.

The first step to transitioning back home after a SCWC event is getting off the plane. In a follow-up interview, a player described the amazing welcome that their team received when the plane landed in their home country in 2018:

“They [government ministers etc.] gave us a great deal of respect...At [Capital City] airport over 100 people were there waiting: When will our team come? When will our team come? Over there we also got a lot of respect. After that we went also went to see the President. He gave us money by way of a prize/reward. Meaning when I reached the airport, the press/news media were there and a lot of family and football people to meet us. It made us/me very happy. Our governor came to the airport for a big reception. Before this I’d never imagined something like this could happen.”

Such a welcome could lead to a level of notoriety for the players in their local areas, which, for one individual, increased when they were selected to play for the national football team associated with their age group.

“After that because of Russia I went to the national team. I also went to [another country]. So this is a big thing that if I hadn’t been on that tour no one would have recognised us and after that.”

“After I played and came back so they said to me: “You play.”...now when I go to the shop/market, even people who don’t know, me, even they say hello to me. They themselves know that I was the one who was in the Street Child World Cup. When I go to the village, when I go somewhere in the town, I don’t know anyone, they themselves know that this [person] is World Cup... So I’ve gained very much respect because of this.”

This player was extremely positive about their experiences in Russia and what came afterwards.

However, such positivity was not always long lived. Two Team Leaders talked about official receptions when they took their teams home after the 2014 event. One described how the promises of free education and other benefits that were made by the politicians when the team went to visit ministers and the president failed to materialise. This had an impact on the wellbeing of the team who felt betrayed. To prepare the 2018 team for the potential of being let down in this way, the Team Leader incorporated sessions about politics and broken promises into the preparation for the 2018 SCWC and for other activities/events that may cause such notoriety. They explained how it was difficult to maintain the balance of wanting to help the players feel proud of their achievements for themselves without relying on the attitudes of other people, but at the same time the exercise is about changing those same attitudes and motivating children to speak for themselves and advocate for their peers.

There were also issues for the players with dealing with the new levels of notoriety within their local communities. Two Youth Leaders, who are players from the case study team, and Team Leaders from another three teams explained the local perception of going abroad as equating to having money and, more importantly, what that meant in terms of the expectations of the local community.

“When people know I have been to Russia they think I have more more money. I have to tell them that I do not.”

“In 2016...they had a lot of popularity as people who’d never supported her came to her for money etc.”

All of them spoke about the difficulty of changing people's minds about what it means to go overseas and three mentioned difficult situations when community members got angry as they thought the players were lying about not having received any money. For two players – from different countries – there were issues between them and their families because of this expectation of money.

As described more fully in Section 4.4, one of the Team Leaders, who has been to a number of previous SCU events, incorporated community training into his programme of activities when they begin the recruitment of the new team. They felt that this sort of preparation was important to ensure that parents understand the whole process and they hold a number of meetings in the months leading up to the event.

There are parents meetings held before and after to ensure that there were no expectations...that the media attention was the main aim of the trip and it is not about getting money.

However, even though the sessions were comprehensive in order to manage parents' expectations of reward from their child's participation, the organisation still have to deal with parents and community members who expect benefits – especially when their child was part of a winning team.

We will talk about it in the community but there is less knowledge in the community. The sister did not believe about the no money because of the winning and being in the media etc.

Managing the expectations of parents was doubly important when the process of obtaining paperwork to enable travel meant the young person making contact with family for the first time in years. For those organisations that recruited players straight from the street, involvement in the SCWC sometimes meant an accelerated approach to young people meeting their families and starting the process of reconciliation. There were instances where children not in contact with parents at all and in institutional care – and under the complete guardianship of the NGO in *loco parentis* – was enough to obtain a court order to enable paperwork to be processed. As mentioned above, one team made their selection of players based on this fact to avoid interaction with difficult parents. However, for most teams, parents were required for getting birth certificates and passports. Therefore, for those players who had not seen their parents for a number of years, this process could involve having to interact with family for the first time since migrating to the street. It is not surprising then that there were players who felt that the SCWC had been an essential part of the reconciliation process: *“going there made me to meet my family again”*.

For some of the players who were interviewed, reconnecting with family in order to get birth certificates and passports involved a move back into the parental home and/or more frequent communication with extended family members. Conversely, the process of reconciliation with parents and developing that contact could be difficult to negotiate when the players returned home. There were cases reported of parents not being as interested in the process of reconciliation after the event, especially when they realised that there was little financial gain to having given their permission for their child to travel to Russia – despite it being made clear in advance that participation did not bring financial benefits. For one player, the parent they wished to spend more time with had been estranged from them for many years and the young person had lived with another family member before migrating to the street a number of years before the 2018 SCWC. The disappointment on the part of the young person, of not being as welcomed by the parent as they had hoped to be, was a factor that influenced their decision to return to the street from the organisation's residential centre a few months after they returned from the SCWC.

The players interviewed after they returned home gave mixed responses to how they felt after the 2018 event. They were both positive and negative about the experience of transitioning back to their usual lives. Two of the players – being interviewed together – felt that being in the SCWC made them feel “*happy*” about themselves because in Moscow “*everyone wanted to know us*” and they were not invisible like they are when they are on the street. When they returned they were not as happy and had to “*bear the situation*”. One of the main issues mentioned was how difficult it was to maintain communication with the friends they had made when they were in Russia, especially in relation to how strong they felt that their friendships had become with players from other teams.

[Team name] boys were like [team name] boys. They were always together and they were friends. Even though we do not speak the same tongue.

I was feeling bad for not being with my friends...I am not feeling so bad now but I can remember my friends.

Not all of the players had access to mobile phones and WIFI when they got back to their countries. Some complained about the amount of time it took to save up enough money to be able to use the internet café to access social media accounts, and how much they felt they had missed of potential conversations and friendship in comparison to others who had the means to communicate more often. One motivation behind trying to stay in touch with other country teams was the limited number of people who players could turn to when they want to talk about and share what they have seen and done. Two of the players, who had both dropped back to the street since returning from Moscow, were particularly concerned that they were unable to stay in contact with players from a particular team. Such contact was also important when players lived in communities of people who have not necessarily left the city in which they live, never mind the country.

As part of ongoing support for the players after they returned home, four Team Leaders who fielded teams made up of children who do not live in the same community described how they arranged regular meetings that brought the players together so they could play football, talk about their lives, and share their memories. This was an essential element of follow-up support for one Team Leader, who highlighted how important it was that members of the team maintain connections with each other and, because they lived quite far from each other, they organised monthly meet ups and paid the players’ related transport costs. Enabling such meetings and contact is not always possible, especially for teams who are recruited from villages across a large portion of a country – as is the case for one team in 2018 – or for teams of players recruited directly from the street in one town who are later reintegrated back to family homes in different parts of the country. However, the comments of both Team Leaders and players emphasise the importance of the players maintaining friendships with each other post event.

Providing a space for reflection and the opportunity to process their experiences collaboratively was therefore important. Given the difficulties faced by some of the players when they returned home, and their decision to return to the street, one organisation engaged a fully qualified counsellor to provide a space in which the team could talk on an individual basis and/or within group therapy sessions. The counselling sessions were conducted over a course of a year and were effective in raising issues affecting the players beyond the event – such as their relationships with close and extended family – in addition to how these issues had been amplified as a result of their participation. This organisation felt that the knowledge gained through this process made counselling something that they would incorporate into the programme again if they chose to participate in future SCU events.

In the follow up interviews, some of the players described their experiences of going to Russia as providing the motivation for changing the direction of their lives and/or the reason for choosing to be a role model for other young people.

When I came back I just decided to go back to school...and also at school I am doing very good.

The fact that I was able to go on a plane is motivating for the people around me, they think that maybe they can go on a plane too and they work harder.

I am known as Moscow boy or Russia boy so it makes me feel good.

Going to Russia helped me leave the street faster [this person was recruited from the street to join the team] and also to go back to school.

These players felt that their participation in Moscow had given them something to work for, and like many of the players interviewed after the event, they could not wait to either return to Moscow (where “people eat chicken for every meal”) or to travel to other countries. Attending the event made one player rethink their plan for the future and develop what they described as realistic goals in terms of education and future career options. Although they wanted to play football professionally, they were also cautious about supporting themselves in the long term.

Football is my talent...but even after football you need an education and you need a job. You might not get a job with football.

This young person was also researching football camps in other countries in the hope that they would be recruited to a youth team.

The attitude of this player, to achieving in the future, was reinforced by a Team Leader responding to the online questionnaire focused on previous SCU events who explained that:

Some of the children were able to use the experience to prove to themselves and others that they could do so much more than what they had expected before. As an aspirational and inspirational project, there were some good aspects to this. The SCWC was a useful platform, one step, among many in the developmental process.

A number of the Team Leaders interviewed shared this viewpoint that the SCWC could be motivating experience, and it therefore appears to be a key starting point when working with the players to leverage impact from participation in a SCU event. In general, these Team Leaders felt that they should focus on: managing the players’ expectations of the event and the impact it would have on their lives; managing parents’ expectations and mediating the relationships between players and their families; and using the event as a means of showing young people what could be possible and building realistic aspirations.

There is an improved belief in the opportunities and possibilities for the kids. Parents are proud, and in the football sense there is an added area of expectation.

However, while this Team Leader planned their team’s experience and participation in the SCWC carefully to ensure that the event could be used to leverage impact for the players, they were also critical of the wider impact of the event to benefit the lives of street-connected children who were not taken to Moscow.

In a deeper way, however, there is no impact. It's the 4th SCWC and still they haven't asked the question, why do kids end up on the streets? There is a limited developmental plan and vision

beyond the events, and this means teams are responsible for everything in preparation, for their teams at the event, and afterwards...

This Team Leader felt that there was something missing and that while the event could be an effective opportunity for Team Leaders to:

1. Learn more about how to advocate for children rights,
2. Facilitate children to learn about their personality through games and teachings,
3. Meet other leaders and explore opportunities of networking.

more could be done to ensure that these aims were met more successfully. They were also concerned that the goals of many of SCU's partners to have more access to funding, attract more media attention, increase or strengthen donor networks were not necessarily being met by participation alone. In the next section, we focus on the wider organisational impact of being involved.

6.3 Organisational Impact

The impact of partnering with SCU, and bringing a team to one or more of the international events, varied across the teams who participated in the research study. The main opportunities resulting from participation were a direct result of being able to network with the other partners and the media attention they attracted. Financial impact and leveraging new donor support, which was mentioned by a number of the organisations as a reason for participating, was not an immediately evident benefit beyond the funding of teams' participation at the events. Preparation for the SCWC had a direct, and often negative, impact on the other projects being delivered by the partner organisations. As three Team Leaders explained, the amount of time that needs to be spent on accounts and finance, fundraising, and other admin work for the preparation of birth certificates, passports, permission to travel overseas and guardianship documents etc. takes staff members away from their usual workload. As such, programmes of work not connected to a SCWC or sport in general fall behind in the lead up to the event for the smaller organisations taking part. In this section, we explore the key opportunities and challenges faced by the organisations before, during and after, competing in an SCU event.

6.3.1 Support through networking

Between six months and a year prior to each SCU event, a summit is held that brings the Team Leaders from each of the country teams together to meet one another and find out about what is expected of them when preparing for the event. The summits are structured in such a way that Team Leaders will not only focus on getting ready for the event but it also provides a space to discuss how to deal with specific issues that affect young people in the communities they work with. For example, the difficulty of obtaining a legal identity affects all of the players who compete in an SCU event and the challenge of obtaining a passport is, therefore, an undertaking in itself when children do not have birth certificates and may not be in contact with parents. A lack of birth registration also has day-to-day implications for young people in many countries as birth certificates are required in a number of countries for access to schools, healthcare and adult identification cards and jobs when young people come-of-age. The summits, therefore, also cover other issues affecting

street-connected children, beyond the event, such as education, police harassment, abuse, violence etc.²

As this research project was envisioned very close to the 2018 SCWC, the researchers were not in attendance at the 2017 summit in Moscow and therefore, cannot comment on the advice and support provided at the event. They were able to attend the volunteer weekend, held in North London in January 2018, to understand how the volunteers were provided with training and induction. In addition, Su Corcoran has previously attended the 2015 summit ahead of the SCG in 2016 as a rapporteur. This summit had been run as a conference with workshops on each of the themes of education, identification, etc., facilitated by various Team Leaders who were in attendance. Corcoran also attended the 2018 summit ahead of the 2019 SCCWC to interview Team Leaders who had been to Moscow - and to talk to new partners about why they were choosing to be involved in the SCCWC as part of a follow up project to this piece of research. The 2018 Cambridge summit was a smaller event, as there were fewer teams at the SCCWC, in which the Team Leaders participated in various discussion activities around visas and passports, preparing children for coming to the UK, education, etc.

At the summits the Team Leaders learn about how each of the other organisations work with street-connected children in their respective countries; share their experiences of preparing to take a team to an international event; and develop a social support network that they are able to draw on in the months leading up to the event. However, it should be noted that Team Leaders are not all able to attend these events – especially if there are visa issues. When this is the case, or when UK-based funding partners are able to attend in their stead, the Team Leaders must rely on a cascade of information later on. By setting up a WhatsApp group, SCU provide a space in which Team Leaders can ask questions directly of SCU staff or each other. They share photographs and stories of their preparation - which includes training the teams and other aspects of the preparation process. This space is important, especially with regards to the fact that some of the organisations have been involved in multiple SCU events, while others will be embarking on the first World Cup journey.

The summits and the WhatsApp group both provide opportunities for new partners to learn from the experience of those who have been through the process before. In their interview responses, two Team Leaders explained that having met each other at the summit helped them to develop working friendships before they reached the event. They were therefore, able to work together more effectively when they arrived in Moscow.

At the SCWC in Moscow, daily meetings brought the Team Leaders together with SCU staff to find out what would happen each day and they had regular meetings as a group throughout the 12-day event in which their working relationships could develop further. The camaraderie developed between Team Leaders in Moscow, helped to break the ice between their associated teams of players. The interactions of the Team Leaders outside of the meetings brought the players together outside of the events' organised activities. The learning and sharing between Team Leaders continued, especially with regards to sessions concerned with preparing to go home and supporting the children once they returned to their home countries. Learning from the experience of previous SCU events, time was allocated towards sharing each other's experience of how to develop systems that ensured the players were supported through the process of representing their country – from

² For an introduction to some these issues see: Corcoran et al. 2020; Corcoran and Wakia 2016; EENET 2017; Growing up on the Streets 2016-18; Kaneva and Corcoran 2021; Thomas de Benitez 2007 & 2011; Woan and 2013.

the methods through which teams were selected, to preparing them for participation, to the return back to their home countries.

At the 2018 summit, which focused on the 2019 SCCWC, teams were also advised to select players who could be good spokespersons for the organisations they represented, who showed signs of leadership qualities, and who appeared to be more emotionally able to deal with the upheaval such a journey entails (see section 6.1). Such advice aimed to both help the organisations prepare the players to be advocates for positive change for street-connected children, as well as reduce the impact on them as individuals. After all, these players are flown half way across the world, are the centre of attention for 12 busy, jetlagged days of sports competition and summit preparation, and then returned to 'normality' and life in their respective informal settlements, institutional care, remand centres, etc. In addition, there is the likelihood that staff members from the partner organisations may not have left their home countries before the event either and may also be feeling a similar sense of upheaval.

Therefore, collaboration through the networking of partner organisations is key to effective support, if the processes are set up to provide a safe space in which questions are asked and answered and sharing is enabled. Although this was observed to some extent in the summits and at the event, this project did not focus on the WhatsApp group and the nature of the interactions that took place to see the extent to which it helped to build the network and provide an 'expert forum' that Team Leaders could turn to for advice. The group had already been in place for a number of months before the research project began and there are ethical implications for obtaining consent to view a conversation retrospectively so we did not pursue this line of enquiry.

It is questionable whether a few months – from summit to event – is enough time to support new partners through the process of recruiting and preparing their teams for an SCU event, even with an effective network set up, especially given the time it has taken some of the longer-term projects to develop effective systems of support for their players. This project did not consider the processes through which SCU select partners and later work directly with them. We are, therefore, unable to explore the methods through which partner organisations are identified and at what point prior to an event the recruitment of partner organisations is no longer conducted. We are also unable to comment on the guidance that is given before the summits. How SCU ensures due diligence with regards to the human resource capacity required to juggle the additional administrative and fundraising workloads as well as putting the frameworks in place to prepare players effectively – in order to establish how much support SCU would need to provide in terms of time – is therefore something that could be explored in future research.

Probably the most meaningful networking relationships described in the interviews, were the ones that the Team Leaders and their colleagues developed for themselves. The coach who accompanied the case study team to Moscow, described how he was in regular contact with two other coaches who spoke the same language as him:

“We help one another and offer advice about how to train the team and other things.”

He was very proud of having colleagues in other countries that he could go to for advice and with whom he could compare experiences. Indeed, this informal network appeared to impact his own professional development.

6.3.2 Harnessing the media for impact and financial benefit

One of the central aims of SCU in organising international events such as the SCWC is to change the way that street-connected children are seen by communities and governments. Therefore, the media play a central role in delivering their advocacy messages. The events themselves attract global media attention with the press being present for the SCWC. This provides an opportunity to tell the children's stories and provide an image of street-connected children as talented, resourceful, and at the top of their game. As one of the Team Leaders often repeats (this is based on a phrase that was originally delivered in London at the summit for the 2016 street child games by one of the speakers): *"we have been struggling for years to get advocates for street children a seat at the table, now we have our own table"*.

How SCU partners engage with and benefit from media attention at the local level varies. All of the teams are challenged with utilising media attention in the run-up to the games to help attract donor funding and drum up support for the teams as they participate in the event. In addition, they aim to continue this coverage when they returned to benefit the profile of each of the organisations and potentially to change policy relating to street-connected children in their countries as well as attracting more funding. Organisations who have fielded teams at multiple events or are being funded by larger organisations in the sector seemed better able to discuss how they develop their media coverage than others. As one Team Leader commented:

"There has been impact on the organisation's profile and gaining popularity in terms of respect from the media and media attention."

According to four Team Leaders, such attention focused mainly on the teams who made it the furthest through the competition. For example, one country team who did well in the 2014 SCWC gained quite a bit of media attention: television interviews, radio and newspaper coverage etc. In 2018, the team representing that country did not make it through to the semi-final and the interest when they returned home was much lower. For the teams that did not make it through the initial qualifying stages of the tournament, media attention when they returned home was similarly limited, as this Team Leader explained:

"Winning matters despite what we would believe in terms of participation, and the challenge is trying to manage expectations about winning"

There are exceptions. One of the organisations, participating in the follow-up stages of the research project, has managed to leverage media attention by pushing the team's story and promoting their participation as much as possible. This organisation prioritises advocacy of child rights and the need to support street-connected children – focusing in particular on working towards getting all children a legal identity in terms of their birth, and acknowledgement and acceptance within their communities. They have developed useful connections with media outlets, and participation in SCU events provides them with an opportunity to amplify this impact. They were not one of the larger organisations bringing teams to the SCWC, but they have developed their approach over the years. In total, four Team Leaders mentioned how the players had been invited to take part in television and/or radio shows in which they were able to talk about their stories and their participation in the SCWC. Such interactions were not confined to media outlets, but also to guest speaker spots at public events and in school assemblies.

Actively engaging with the media after the teams return home can be an extra challenge for the players. Negotiating with the media to change their production timetables for example was problematic:

“it was challenging with the media attention as [they] were not going to school as they were needed for interviews etc. This impacts on their work, especially when trying to balance expectations at school and dealing with the school can be quite difficult especially during exam season.”

This organisation had difficulties engaging with the media and negotiating their expectations of access to the teams. They were torn between wanting media coverage and meeting the sometimes overwhelming needs of demanding members of the media.

Other Team Leaders saw these interviews as opportunities for the team to talk about their experiences:

“they get to talk about their experience and are given a platform for explaining their experience when others don’t understand this”

It can be difficult returning home and wanting to share what they have seen and done, especially when most of their community have not left the city in which they live, never mind the country. Therefore, interviews with the media provide an opportunity to talk and reflect. It does require that a support system is set up by the organisation to both train and prepare them for the interviews and debrief effectively afterwards to ensure that the children are able to talk about their experiences of the media, cope with this extra attention, and as one Team Leader said:

“keep their feet on the ground”.

Most of the organisations reported limited or no financial gain from their participation in the events. Although many of the teams were able to access new funding streams to meet the costs of taking a team to play at the event, these donors did not necessarily maintain long-term support afterwards. One Team Leader, who said that *“there is no definitive link between finance and media attention”*, saw financial impact for individual players through their media coverage – with audience members contributing to school fees etc. This organisation rotates the players so that they share the opportunities and the associated burdens of being in the media.

P had an article in the paper and it was their personal account that was included, not the organisation’s. They were given a lot of money and wanted to give the money to the organisation. But we told them that they should keep it for school fees as that’s what it was given for.

There was one case of involvement in the SCWC limiting financial investment. One organisation was approached by an International NGO interested in developing a sports-based programme but decided not to collaborate because they were already partnered with SCU. It was suspected that the donor felt that such involvement equated to the organisation receiving money from elsewhere and did not require as much support. This raises important questions about funding for follow-on programmes that continue work with the players – especially in relation to dealing with media attention – as well as non-SCWC work. As one Team Leader pondered:

Do you directly refer to your involvement in the Street Child World Cup with donors you want to fund non-Street Child World Cup? If so how responsive are they in this? Is it a convincing reason for them to fund your non-Street Child World Cup work?

There is a dilemma as to whether organisations should directly refer to their involvement in the SCWC with potential donors when looking for funding for their other programmes or not. Here are comments from three other Team Leaders:

We do not ask donors who fund non-Street Child World Cup projects, [to fund our participation in the SCWC] unless they are interested. When a long-term donor knows the primary priority need is non-Street Child World Cup projects they want support for that as a priority. At the same time, they try to help us in possible ways by spreading the message.

We have not approached any new donors since we participated in the Street Child World Cup and we have not been approached for a sports project because they have come to know about our Street Child World Cup involvement.

We have a large donor interested in programmes. The Street Child World Cup was a nice added benefit but the donor wasn't necessarily after a great media focused CSR [corporate social responsibility] story.

However, one of the Team Leaders was positive about financial gain for the organisation as a result of participating in the SCWC. They described how their long-term funders were not interested in supporting teams to attend the SCWC and that new donors had to be found to meet the costs of taking the team to Moscow; but they were confident about their involvement in the SCWC being a useful addition to the portfolio used to attract new donor support for long-term programmes.

It is kind of rare chance for street-connected children to represent their country in a world event. And it show to people when we manage the program seriously we can give big impact to children.

This organisation was looking at long-term strategic approaches to involvement that included a year-long programme in which the children who played at the SCWC became role models, involved in inspiring others through peer-to-peer activities. Therefore, they positioned their involvement in the SCWC as a small part of a much wider programme of support and advocacy.

It is not clear from the interview responses whether an organisation being involved in the Street Child World Cup makes donors more likely to give to other projects. Some of the Team Leaders were clear that they do not use the SCWC as a way of convincing new donors to support them. Either because they had not thought about how advantageous this could be to the organisation's portfolio, or because they had found from experience that certain donors would fund only their participation in the event and nothing else, or donors were not interested in the event and only focused on specific intervention programmes. Only one Team Leader interviewed explained how being involved in the SCWC had attracted new donors to support the organisation to deliver programmes not connected to attending the SCWC.

Given that all of the Team Leaders interviewed explained the need to find new donors to fund their participation in the SCWC, it is possible to say that this additional fundraising necessarily involves additional work for the organisation.

The event raised a lot of publicity for the team. It opened a few doors towards sponsors and groups we never would have met before [who funded their participation in the event]. There was an intense pressure on the organisation which stretched us and burned out key members of staff however. This has long-term effects on the organisation.

As this quote suggests, the process of attracting these new donors does raise the profile of an organisation, but it also requires that staff members focus specifically on this task. Therefore, small organisations, without dedicated fundraising and communication teams, struggled to meet fundraising commitments in addition to delivering all of the usual programmes of work - as three Team Leaders explained. The redirection of efforts towards fundraising for the event also preventing a focus on fundraising for their usual programmes, the impact of which was felt long after the end of

the event itself. These problems were also compounded by all of the additional administration that was required to get a team to another country and raised important questions about whether the level of impact was worth the additional work.

It's so hard in the lead up to the event as there are so many documents that need to be completed, passports to be processed, and funding to find etc. It may be a good opportunity but also the cost is huge and would spending on grassroots be better? It's a huge amount of work for several members of staff, and the only real benefit is the media attention. For us this attention was less after Moscow than previous events because we didn't make it as far in the competition.

A number of the teams tried to engage with social media and other platforms to raise the profile of their organisations during the event. The media coverage of the events themselves, in addition to video clips etc. created by the SCU communications team provided a resource for the organisations to use in their own promotional and advocacy work. One of the Team Leaders described how there were issues in 2018 with the ability to ensure real-time interaction with this coverage.

The highlights and videos did not have a real-time impact as they were not instantly available to sponsors and teams. So they couldn't be used as quickly as they would on platforms that enable live streaming for example with commentators.

This was brought up in relation to the amount of money that some sponsors contribute - particularly in relation to being named on the kit worn by the team - and the level of interaction that they expect as a result of the sponsorship. For example, to sponsor the logo on a SCWC shirt required a donation of £30,000, which is a considerable investment and some companies expect a certain level of information as a result. Two team leaders highlighted how difficult it was to attract sponsors at this level.

Sponsors are very difficult to get for one £30,000 logo. If we have lots of minor sponsors it is easier but there are size issues [for the inclusion of their logos on the shirt].

As Section 4 suggests, team leaders saw involvement in the SCWC as providing a platform from which they could leverage change at local, and potentially national, levels. The media coverage of the event was thought of as a focus around which they could further their advocacy programmes.

We want to build larger programmes and sustainability off the media coverage of the team.

However, three Team Leaders specifically mentioned how difficult it was to do this when the media coverage focused predominantly on the football and not the General Assembly, which, given the earlier comments about not being in the top three or four teams and related media interest, becomes more difficult for teams at the bottom of the leader board.

As the aim of SCU in organising SCWC events is 'to change the negative perceptions and treatment of street children everywhere', media coverage of the events was generally understood as an important first step in developing the message that these children should be taken seriously. As this section has showed, organisations have had varied experience in terms of meeting advocacy and fundraising goals – and this extends to their use of the media. One clear observation is how the success of the team in the competition has an effect on the level of media coverage they attract in their home country during and after the event. Consequently, there are important questions to answer in relation to how SCU's message is disseminated, the degree to which this message – delivered by the SCWC event itself – is able to change negative perceptions, and the sustainability of this message in terms of its impact on social change.

6.4 Sustainability of the message

The questions asked during the interviews with the players, Youth Leaders, and Team Leaders, did not focus on the sustainability of the message directly. Rather, we specifically asked about what had happened since the event in Moscow, what it was like to return home, and what they could tell us about the impact of being involved in the event for the players, their communities, and the organisations supporting them. We also asked what they thought could be done differently. In addition to suggestions for future events, this section explores the issues identified during the interviews that are related to whether Team Leaders felt that their organisations would continue with their partnership with SCU. Three team leaders decided that the team they took to the 2018 SCWC would be their last. The reasons for this were primarily related to the amount of work required to get a team to the event, the advocacy and financial returns they received as a result of this effort, and what that meant for the programmes that were neglected as a result. One Team Leader was using their time in Moscow to judge how much SCU had focused on developing their approach to the SCWC in relation to the lessons learned in 2014:

We want to see if lessons from 2014 have been properly learned, to gauge if we continue to be part of this.

An additional point of concern was the degree to which SCWC events contributed to changing attitudes towards street-connected children. There was a general consensus, from the Team Leaders who had been to more than one SCU event, that the Congress conducted in Moscow was a considerable improvement on previous iterations. The workshops delivered by the StreetInvest team had enabled the players to identify key messages that they wanted to communicate to policymakers at the General Assembly. These Team Leaders had not all been involved in the 2016 Street Child Games. The Congress was therefore seen as central to changing the perceptions of decision-makers towards street-connected children and what needs to be done to improve their situation.

However, three Team Leaders felt that the impact of these messages was limited due to the limited media coverage of the General Assembly in relation to the football – and how this prevented the communication of the event’s core message(s).

There is limited discussion of why kids are on the streets and the media related to results in football is not a central message to put forward.

Other Team Leaders also commented on the lack of frameworks and related structures to support partners in leveraging sustainable impact from the Congress. This concerned the effective preparation of the players to take part in the congress before the event and their ability to build on the congress after the event - especially in terms of engaging with the media if they were not a winning team.

For a number of the team leaders, participation in a SCWC enabled a greater level of interaction with policymakers from their home countries. At each of the SCU events, ambassadors and other members of staff from embassies representing the teams’ countries are invited to watch various activities. Generally this relates to ambassadors watching ‘their’ team compete in matches and/or perform at the Late Show (held most evenings, this was an opportunity for each team to present their country and a dance/song for the other teams). For some teams, the interactions also involved being invited to the embassy, eating dinner with an ambassador, receiving tours of the city hosting the SCWC, and, for one, assistance shipping items required for their performance in the Late Show. Not all the countries represented at a SCWC have embassies or consulates in the host cities, and we

are unable to ascertain whether interaction with an overseas office has an impact on home country policies. However, the practice does raise the profile of street-connected children.

In Moscow, a local government representative accompanied one team which was partially funded by government office as it was a requirement of the funding. This has led to some progress towards policy impact at a local level, although the changes have been small. The official was able to interact with other teams and volunteers, and was present for some of the workshops conducted for Team Leaders. As such they were able to develop a deeper understanding of the lived realities of being street-connected. Both in Moscow and during a meeting with the research team after they had returned home, this official expressed an interest in advocating for change. One key starting point for them, was the development of sports programmes for young people. The official was very clear to highlight how long term change could only happen in small steps. Another example of policy change developing from participation in the SCWC was described by a Team Leader in relation to their team being invited to meet government officials when they returned home from the 2014 event. According to the Team Leader, adaptations had been made to social policy in relation to the protection of street-connected children.

Team Leaders did not only translate impact in terms of policy change towards street-connected young people, they also saw the SCWC as a sporting event that could provide a network of good practice in terms of the use of sport to leverage change and the nurturing of talent. One Team Leader in particular, talked about potential opportunities for SCU to look at providing funding for coaching development and training.

For example, having a Street Child United licence to say this is how you coach and providing psychological levels of how you coach, better governance and things been done in the right way.

They were particularly concerned with the behaviour of some of the coaches accompanying teams to Moscow and how the “*only here to win*” attitude affected the ways in which the teams interacted with each other on and off the pitches. In Moscow, this raised a number of safeguarding issues that three team leaders felt could have been avoided if Team Leaders and coaches were held to stricter codes of conduct and the venue was chosen to be safe and comfortable (to “*give more meaningful impact*”). Safeguarding issues in relation to the choice of venue were a particular issue, especially the choice of a large hotel and the difficulty it posed for monitoring the players and limiting their interactions with people not involved in the SCWC.

The Team Leader above suggested that SCU could develop an “*international network with codes of conduct and sanctions*” that brought the message of the SCWC into focus, rather than just the sporting achievements of the teams. This suggestion also extended to the selection of partners invited to field teams at the SCWC.

Working with the right partners to get the message across. Building infrastructure for the long term with the project and a number of country teams who want to do this and accept all the rules (and do not want to win at all costs) then long-term dialogue is more likely to happen.

An additional concern, in relation to holding the event in Russia, was the fact that the 2010 and 2014 SCWC events had directly challenged human rights abuses affecting street-connected children in the countries hosting the FIFA World Cup. Two Team Leaders were concerned that there was no reference made to human rights issues in Russia beyond the messages delivered by the home teams during the General Assembly.

For example, there was no discussion of human rights issues in Russia, and maybe a neutral venue should have been chosen as they were not going to challenge the issues in the home country as they did in Brazil and South Africa.

This fed into the question of whether SCWC events were able to effect changes in attitudes towards street-connected children. In general, as we discussed in Section 4, Team Leaders felt that the SCWC could provide such a platform for change.

The potential for the SCWC to be part of a larger aspirational and inspirational platform is big.

However, four team leaders wanted to see more focus on the collaborative network that they felt such a platform requires if change is to be meaningful and sustainable. One suggested that this network be developed further to enable more collaboration and shared decision-making.

If they can start listening more to Team Leaders and decentralising decision-making there is great potential for the organisations involved.

In particular, they felt that there was more that could be done to build the capacity of partner organisations to carry the message of the SCWC forward as well as organisational capacity on the ground: *“finance organisational capacity and programmes for the kids”*.

Finally, one of the team leaders was critical of how much money was used to stage the SCWC in relation to how clear and sustainable they felt the message of the event could have been if more focus and budget had been directed towards achieving it.

Spending money on the fancy boat ride or on the big hotel could have been saved... What is best for the kids? To come away from two weeks of luxury or to establish more long-term messages and goals?

They were particularly concerned about this in relation to the cost of taking the SCWC to Qatar in 2022 and wondered about the merit of changing the SCWC format of following the FIFA world cup. While this plan was effective for the first two venues in shining a light on human rights abuses affecting street-connected children in South Africa and Brazil, it was unlikely to be a consideration in Qatar if they had not highlighted the issues in Moscow. They therefore suggested that more meaningful change could be achieved by choosing other countries where more meaningful legacies could be left afterwards.

Rather than spending the money at an expensive venue such as Moscow/Qatar, there is space to consider working in a cheaper country and potentially building a venue that partner organisations in country can use as a venue for future work

6.5 Summary

To ease the transition to ‘normal life’ for the players, and leverage impact for them at the individual level requires a long-term approach on the part of the organisations that includes both the process through which they are prepared to participate in the event as well as follow-up activities when they return home. There are variety of ways in which partner organisations ensure this process but a key to addressing the emotional upheaval of being the centre of attention for 12 days before having to yet again deal with the complexities of daily life involves managing the expectations of the players, their families, and their wider communities. In addition, providing spaces in which players are able to maintain communication with each other, to share their unique experiences, is essential to help them

reflect and move forward. SCWC events can have inspirational and aspirational impact on the players who participate, but participation can also be responsible for additional challenges, which can be avoided or addressed with effective preparation.

Partner organisations report varying degrees of impact related to opportunities for wider networking, the ability to harness the media in communicating the advocacy messages and financial benefits from involvement in the events. The limited benefits of participating in the SCWC, in relation to the time and financial investment required to field a team and the impact on other programmes of work, were identified by some team leaders as an issue. Others felt that the event provides a unique platform through which they were able to promote their advocacy messages to a wider audience. In general, there was limited financial gain reported from being part of the SCWC.



7 Conceptualising impact from the SCWC and related recommendations

“We were clear that going to the SCWC was an opportunity to travel and meet new people and that afterwards they would be returning home and long-term change was up to the young people themselves to work towards”

Team Leader, Team L

The 2018 Street Child World Cup (SCWC) provided an opportunity to understand how players experienced the event, from the moment they put themselves forward for team selection to engaging in the activities arranged in Moscow, and enabled a specific focus on the longer term impact of the event on the players and the organisations supporting their participation. In addition, we were able to make a retrospective exploration of previous Street Child United (SCU) events with Team Leaders and Youth Leaders, to reflect upon the challenges and opportunities that arose for the players and the organisations who supported their participation. From March 2018 to November 2019, multiple data generation methods were conducted with Team Leaders, Youth Leaders and players from 16 countries. In this section, we further explore some of the key themes identified previously to develop potential recommendations and/or points for discussion that should be considered in relation to the organisation of future events.

7.1 Experiencing Impact

There are many positives explained in the previous sections in relation to the impact of participating in a SCWC. These mainly relate to players interacting with and learning from children in similar situations to them but from other countries, developing confidence through their selection, participation and representing their country, and being motivated to complete their education and training and think about their future. As a number of organisations use the event as part of a wider programme focused on developing strong role models - either to provide peer support for other children or as a spokesperson within a larger advocacy programme - participating in a SCWC also positively benefits the community by raising aspirations. However, such impact was not evident across all cases and situations. There were players who, after having such a good time at the event, struggled with the transition back to their home countries and others who had difficulty negotiating the interactions they had with family, friends, and the wider community because they felt that they had changed or that they were perceived as different.

It is not surprising that a percentage of the players who participated in the four SCWC events have returned to their lives on the street. A number of street-connected children who participate in various reintegration programmes delivered in many countries – and who have never attended such an event – are expected to drop out at some point. Street-connected children may experience varying degrees of trauma in relation to the situation that was their motivating factor for migration to the street in the first place, or in relation to their experiences of being street-connected (e.g. Corcoran et al. 2020; Kaime-Atterhög et al. 2007; Karabanow 2008). Some will struggle with the transition back into communities, especially when adult members may represent the perpetrators of the abuse and neglect responsible for the trauma. They may therefore choose to return to the

familial connections they make on the street and/or the availability of solvents and other substances that help them to forget. Street-connected children are at greater risk of exposure to violence and abuse (e.g. Thomas de Benitez 2007). In relation to the effects of trauma, and related mental health conditions, there is an emotional upheaval inherent to taking part in an event such as the SCWC. They are the centre of attention for a very short period of time in which they both make and are separated from new friends in a very short period of time. They travel overseas for the first time and are given the responsibility of being a spokesperson for other children. All of this will have an impact and it is not always possible to detect or predict how trauma has and will affect an individual. Therefore, while many players will generally benefit from their participation, our first recommendation is that

1. It is important to develop structures that not only provide safe spaces for participation, but also safe supported transitions for the players back into their 'normal' lives.

This is especially important when normal does not exist. The players are 'changed' by the event because of their experiences. They may also be positioned very differently by the communities they return to. In addition, if we consider the children who have reconnected with family as a result of their participation in the SCWC for example, they are returning to a very different situation and will have certain expectations of their lives post event.

The players may therefore be disappointed by the degree to which the event has 'changed their lives', or provided opportunities for the better future they may have perceived prior to the event. All of their expectations need to be managed responsibly. Consequently, important questions are raised about which organisations are chosen as partners, their capacity to provide a framework of support when selecting and preparing players for the event, when they are at the event, and more importantly as they transition into life after the event; and the extent to which SCU could, or should, support these organisations to ensure that provision.

As one team leader explained (as noted above), it is important to "burst the bubble responsibly". Recommendations from good practice described by the Team Leaders include the provision of counselling, especially from a qualified counsellor, and/or at the very least a space in which the players are able to share their experiences and reconnect with other players who had been at the SCWC. Such programmes of connection and reconnection varied from regular monthly meetings to year-long programmes in which the players also channelled their experience into peer educator roles. Given that they live in communities which may not have left that area of the country, never mind travelling overseas, their ability to reflect upon their experiences and make sense of their situations after the event is important – especially when the teams are recruited from multiple organisations/places.

A clear finding from the interviews is that impact was greater, and generally more positive, when effective frameworks of support were in place – and these began with the structures through which the players were prepared for the event. Therefore, while workshops held at the SCWC on how to support players as they return to their home countries are useful for new Team Leaders, they are delivered too late in the process. Our second recommendation, related to the first, is that:

2. SCU should make the importance of effective support programmes for the players clear as early as possible.

It is potentially something that is considered during the selection of the organisation as a partner and definitely as soon as the partnership is developed.

7.2 Anticipating impact

Organisations wishing to partner with SCU chose to do so because they viewed participation in a SCWC as providing advantages in terms of opportunities to:

- a) advocate for the rights of street-connected children at local, national, and international levels
- b) increase media exposure and fundraising
- c) network with organisations from other countries
- d) give children who participate a great experience

It would therefore be useful to discuss the extent to which the data suggests that these aims have been translated into impact.

There were a number of factors affecting the ability of partner organisations to leverage impact in terms of meeting advocacy goals. The first relates to the human resource capacity of each organisation. The larger partner organisations, with dedicated communication and fundraising teams, or those who had developed their approach over a number of SCU events, were more able to engage with the media and negotiate the inclusion of their particular message – but this was not the case for all longer-term partners. In addition, being a team at the top of the leaderboard equated to more interest and therefore more media coverage after the end of a SCWC event. Some teams (especially those who did not progress far in the competition) received no media coverage when they returned home.

When the media were engaged, coverage did not necessarily relate to advocacy goals towards providing street-connected children with greater access to their rights as the focus was perceived to be more on the football than the overall message of the event, as mentioned by one Team Leader earlier. For some team leaders, the event was a definitive part of their advocacy programme, providing the stage upon which they were able to highlight the particular messages that they wished to share: e.g. through the statements made during the General Assembly and how later interactions with the media, and/or in other speaking events built upon and developed these messages.

In relation to meeting fundraising goals, larger organisations with greater human resource capacity were again better able to both fundraise to attend the SCWC and leverage their participation towards achieving further funding for their day-to-day programmes with street-connected children. However, in this instance, long-term partnership was not an indicator of great success in fundraising for other programmes of work post event. Some Team Leaders were not clear about how they could use their participation to leverage impact towards meeting either advocacy or fundraising goals. There is therefore, a need to explore how SCU can support partner organisations to develop their

capacity in relation to advocacy and/or media engagement. Our third recommendation therefore would be to:

SCWC events provide a unique platform for networking through which partner organisations can share their experiences of working with street-connected children as well as how they were

3. Explore how to further raise the profile of the General Assembly and the messages developed by the players, and how these messages can be further developed through long-term advocacy programmes.

preparing to participate in the event. The Summit, held in the lead up to the event, a WhatsApp group for Team Leaders, and regular meetings and workshops at the event both enabled SCU to communicate with Team Leaders and provided different spaces in which they could learn from and support each other. In addition, smaller networks of support – between Team Leaders and coaches – developed at the event and continued through modes of communication decided by the individuals concerned. However, the ability of this network to deliver a stronger, collaborative, advocacy message was not discussed in positive terms. Rather, the need for such a network was mentioned by Team Leaders who wanted greater impact and a focus on why children are on the street in the first place, and that partner organisations should have more say in order to shape both the message and the method of delivery.

Our fourth potential recommendation could therefore relate to the development of the SCWC platform as the focus of an inclusive network, underpinned by a clear set of values and principles (e.g. Miles et al 2013).

4. The network should provide clear structures in which partners are able to share experience and models of good practice and, given the different contexts within which each of the organisations work, SCU support them to adapt and develop these

It is important that the organisations are able to build on their own institutional knowledge and expertise in a way that works for them at the local level, but at the same time takes on board the learning that has come from other organisations' previous experiences of an SCU event.

The young people interviewed in Moscow saw their participation as potentially providing a springboard to better opportunities in the future (e.g. playing professionally). Football provided the players with the means of feeling pride and belonging – in being part of a team and representing their country – and they were generally optimistic about the future advantages that their participation would lead to. All their comments about the event were positive and they were generally proud to be representing their country and/or street-connected children. The Youth Leaders interviewed in Moscow and half of the players interviewed after the event felt that participating in the SCWC had helped them to visualise a future for themselves and they had been inspired to try harder and finish their education.

However, it must be noted that Youth Leaders are selected because they make good role models and are able to communicate on behalf of SCU. Some of them spoke about how their teammates did not necessarily have the same experiences of going home, and some of the case study team returned to the street after the event. Therefore, while the event itself provided the players with the opportunity to travel and to learn from other young children in similar situations, there is the potential for clearer guidance on the selection and long-term support of the teams as explained earlier in the first recommendation.

The Team Leaders who appeared to describe a greater level of impact for their teams were those who had developed comprehensive programmes of preparation for the players before they left for Moscow. These programmes were key to: managing expectations of players, parents and the wider community; developing an integrated programme of training to help the players to play together as a team; delivering child rights education to prepare them for the Congress; and focusing on what was expected of the players (and the challenges they would face) when they returned home. As such, they highlight the importance of structures to create the foundation for meaningful participation.

However, the delivery of such programmes necessarily involve staff capacity and financial input that small organisations struggle to provide – especially considering the extra work already required to obtain the necessary paperwork for each player to travel overseas and fundraise the costs of the journey. Team Leaders also felt constrained by the ways in which they work with young people. For example, those organisations who conduct their work in street-based contexts must recruit the players directly from the street, while others run more long-term programmes of support and residential care implying different ways of working and preparing the players for the journey. It is important to consider how the individual starting points for each young person’s relationship with the SCWC differs across contexts – in terms of where they are in their journeys away from the street. However, regardless of starting point we are still able to conclude that when the SCWC is positioned within an organisation’s larger programme of work and commitment to the children fielded at the event there is a greater degree of impact. For example, employing selection criteria that do not totally focus on football talent. Rather the criteria include the ability to cope with the upheaval of an intense 12 days and returning home to continue work as a peer educator or role model after the event, which necessarily implies a greater level of focus on individual support. Such a programme could benefit a long list of potential players selected – including those that stay behind because of the paperwork constraints that could affect final team selection.

It must be noted at this point that we are not advocating for SCU to only work with larger organisations. Different partners bring different expertise to the table and all types of organisations are able to learn from each other. As the fourth recommendation suggests, the structures SCU have in place to support organisations – e.g. to facilitate peer support – need to take account of the different places from which the partnerships develop and adapt accordingly.

7.3 Sustaining Impact

There were many positives that both the players and the Team Leaders described about being in Moscow. The most mentioned were the friendships that the players forged within their own teams

and with players from other countries. Making new friends not only provided a sense of belonging within their national teams but also a sense that they belonged to a wider global community. Being accepted, by SCU staff, the volunteers, the other teams, was an important part of being at the event and developing a feeling of belonging and understanding that there were children from other countries who shared similar experiences. Hearing each other's stories and helping them to recognise that the problems they face are shared across cultures gave them confidence that they were not alone. The Congress provided the players with the space and confidence to reflect upon the challenges they faced, especially in relation to hearing how others experience similar problems in their particular countries, as well as to help them to look beyond their problems to focus on the future and develop a greater sense of self-esteem.

Our fifth recommendation based on the findings is that:

5. Players should be supported to understand that being part of the SCWC cannot immediately change their lived realities, but that it could become an important part of a long-term process, and positive experiences at the event could help them to develop self-confidence and the strength to face the barriers they experience at home.

Again, ensuring such impact requires effective support structures to be in place, and clear communication in terms of the degree to which the players' advocacy can impact sustained long-term change. The Congress provides a space in which the players share their stories and, given the roles that adults in power have played in relation to their street-connectedness, it is important that this is a safe space and that the players understand the implications of choosing to share (e.g. Ferguson 2020). The messages that they develop for the General Assembly are rooted in the experiences they share and are therefore inextricably part of who they are and how they see their selves on that international stage.

Limited impact, which is to be expected given the nature of the event and the timescales over which transformative change in policy take place in practice, can therefore lead to disappointment after the hype of speaking in front of 'the world'. Such disappointment was also an issue when the receptions players received from government ministers and other policy makers resulted in broken promises. Ensuring that the players understand the limited impact of the SCWC as a platform without a sustained focus on advocacy afterwards is a difficult balance to strike, but it is an important part of their preparation for the event, and their participation in any follow up advocacy work afterwards. The players need support to negotiate the minefield of interacting with politicians and anyone else who are the targets of their advocacy strategies. SCU and the organisations who sign up to SCU events, should ensure that players feel like their contribution was worth something and that effective structures are in place to sustain the development of the message after the event. In order to do this, our final recommendation, calls for:

6. Better modes of engaging with the media and focused advocacy to achieve real change should be developed, while also ensuring that the players understand that change is made little by little – in small steps.

With such structures in place, as discussed previously, there could also be direct impact in terms of attracting new and renewed sources of funding and changes in policy.

Finally, it is also important (in relation to Recommendation 5) to help the players understand the implications of being a role model or spokesperson for street-connected children. Being at the event means that their image is broadcast far and wide through the international media coverage of the event. Images, such as those included in this report, mean that the identity of being a ‘street child’ is very difficult to shake off. Not only are players’ stories shared in the Congress, but they are central to some of the news articles that focus on the event (e.g. Griffin 2018; Moore 2013). There were negative implications to notoriety mentioned by either Team Leaders or players from six countries – particularly with regard to expectations of financial gain from participating. Therefore, SCU and the partner organisations have an obligation to help the players understand the implications of participation in addition to the potential benefits that were clearly identified in this research study.

7.4 Summary

Participating in the SCWC has brought many positive benefits to the players, their wider communities and the organisations who support them. These relate to the inspirational and aspirational effects on individual achievement of the players and their peers, the development of a platform upon which to communicate advocacy messages addressing the situations of street-connected young people, and changes to policy at local and national level. However, these benefits have not been experienced universally – by the players, their communities, or the organisations – and there is work to do to address the relative impact versus workload imbalance that some Team Leaders describe. In addition, recommendations have been made with regards to strengthening the international network claimed by the SCU to both meet the advocacy goals made clear in their mission statement and provide structures within which organisations are assisted to better support their players before, during, and after the event.

“He thinks it’s great...he really appreciates the opportunity that we are giving him, to be here, to be participating, and to be meeting new people and new cultures, so he really appreciates that.”

Team N player through translator



8 Further Research

According to the Street Child United website, they are an international network of ‘grassroots and international organisations, volunteers and supporters, corporate partners and sponsors, influences and experts, producers and collaborators, faith groups and football clubs, media and artists, schools and clubs, working together to change the way the world sees and treats street connected children everywhere’. In order to leverage impact from Street Child World Cup and other SCU events, there needs to be a clear mission and structure through which the members of such an international network are able to collaborate and work together for change. The project explored in this report focused on players’ experiences of participating in the event and how they, and the team leaders, describe the impact of participating on them, the communities, and the organisations who support them. We also aim to understand why organisations choose to become involved and their particular aims for participating.

Therefore, we did not focus on processes through which a SCWC is delivered and the structures in place through which to understand how impact is leveraged and what could be done to improve the structures. For example:

- How are partner organisations chosen in relation to meeting the mission of SCU - to harness the power of football to change the way street-connected children are positioned?
- How do partner organisations, and other network members, understand the role of the SCWC and how does that correspond to achieving the mission?
- How does SCU develop collaborative frameworks that enable partner organisations to develop and use their capacity to influence change?

Further research, would involve interviewing SCU staff members, volunteers, trustees, and key personnel from the organisations who work with SCU to deliver aspects such as Team Leader workshops or the Congress.

The SCWC presents itself as a platform with which the power of football can be harnessed to raise awareness and tackle the widespread stigma faced by street connected children – changing the story and challenging negative stereotypes. The event therefore, provides an opportunity to bring the teams together to compete, in addition to having the players’ voices heard at the General Assembly. Media coverage is a key aspect of the advocacy process required to disseminate the message to local, national and international audiences in order to support the lobby for change. Given that team leaders suggest that more work needs to be done to develop this message, a useful next step would be to analyse how effective the media has been as a vehicle for contributing to and communicating transformative impact. Therefore, further research could focus on a content analysis of the media coverage of one or all SCU events. Such a focus would also identify whether the coverage does focus mainly on the football, and not on the lived realities of street connected young people and the need for change with regards to social policy. Such analysis would help to understand how the media is currently being utilised and the extent to which a ‘message’ (whatever that might be) is being disseminated.

Funding has been secured from the Leisure Studies Association, for a partnership between academics from Manchester Metropolitan University and Leeds Beckett University to focus on some of these aspects in relation to the Street Child Cricket World Cup.

“For me I have learned a lot, especially through congress, through hearing in congress and general assembly - something strong”

Team Leader, Team I



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