



She Got Game #NL

Final report



Project Period: Nov'22-May'23

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1. SUMMARY

In a 6-month project 8 coaches and 10 Girl Leaders have been creating safe spaces for 315 teen-girls, by organising weekly sports sessions and 1 event for them.

We clearly experienced the need for these type of activities for girls, since girls lack spaces where they feel safe and can play sports together. Also research shows that teen girls (12+) have far less opportunities to participate and engage in community sports activities; 35% of all girls in the Netherlands never or hardly ever play sports, and around 40% for teen-girls in urban settings or girls from minority groups.

ISA, together with four community organisation-partners, successfully created safe spaces for teen-girls in four different cities across the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Den Bosch, Nijmegen and Tilburg) to team-up and to have fun. Both vital for physical and mental health of participants, that they would miss out if no opportunities are created for them.

Moreover, Girl Leaders and Coaches reported to have gained skills as a sports leader or mentor, and gained self-esteem to lead a group, to organise sessions and an event on their own, and mainly to just start and do it! All organisations reported to have gained from the project in terms of trained female coaches and youth leaders, the exchange between different towns, or professionalisation of their organisation. And all like to participate in a follow-up project, that will benefit from the first learnings, and - if for a longer period of time - could contribute to greater and more sustainable impact for participating teen-girls.

We proudly present the impact results of the first big steps of She Got Game #NL in more detail below.

1. IMPACT MADE FOR PARTICIPATING GIRLS

The project created safe spaces in 7 communities for girls to play sports and come together, compared to the 4 communities we aimed at. First of all, participating Girl Leaders – representative for the participating girls from the same community – felt the need for creating safe spaces for girls. In our first training several trainees mentioned that the reason for them to join the project was that they themselves lack safe spaces in their communities, and they miss a place where they can come together, to have fun, and to play sports. “I miss doing fun things with other girls, besides school and being at home. I really want to get off that couch,” as one of the trainees puts it.

Our strategy for creating safe spaces for teen-girl participants is to use sports to have fun and to team up positively with peers and mentors within a safe space in their community. The Coaches and Girl Leaders applied this strategy after training, and that is how they have supported the impact of it, as reflected in these testimonies:

Girl Leader (17 years)

Girls should come outside and play more, but in our community many places for playing sports are unsafe. In this project we do create these safe places to play for girls. I really love it that we can do so!

Coach (37 years)

It's great to see that we create a space for girls where they feel understood. This is a group that would not easily go to the gym, and without these activities they would not play sports at all.

Manager Community Organisation (37 years)

The project helped us getting follow-up funding. If we successfully fund the remaining 50%, it means that we can secure a fixed day and time on a professional football court for the girls.

And that means a lot! Our girls will finally feel that they are as important!

As before – depending on other organisations – priority was always given to boys' football, leaving the girls with changing times and days, or even half a court.

The applied the strategy and created safe spaces through girls-only sports sessions in 7 communities:

- Amsterdam-Oost, for a new group of teen-girls.
- Nijmegen-West (Lindenholt), for a new group of 12+ girls.
- Tilburg-Noord (De Schans), adding new teen girls in existing activities.
- And in 4 communities in Den Bosch, including Hambaken, offering new only-girls sports activities next to existing services for young people.



One of the teams at the Jointly Women event (Nijmegen March 2023). Please note that the picture is for reporting purposes only, and cannot be shared.

From our surveys and the reports of Girl Leaders we learned what the project did for the teen-girl participants:

Participant (13 years)

I always used to be sportive, doing kickboxing and football. And now I started playing football with Jointly Women. I like it because we have a female trainer, and there are no boys watching us from the sideline. Here it's really different. If I want I can even go without a headscarf, because we are amongst ourselves as girls. I really want to keep on playing, and to get better in football.

Participant (17 years)

If I had a bad day, then the sport session are a great closure of the day. I would never go to the gym on a day like that. I sometimes go, reluctantly. But with these football sessions, I really look forward to. I have fun here. And forget about the bad day.

Girl Leader (21 years)

Some of the girls participating in our activities, only played sports during physical education at school . And now they come and play football weekly.

And some of them were very shy at the beginning, but after a few times they got very active and enthusiastic, because it's not about to be the fastest or the best, it's about having fun playing sports together. That helped a lot, and I could see them feeling more and more comfortable, and connect to each other.

They also learned to solve conflicts. At the start we sometimes had to solve quarrels, whereas later on they were capable to solve them themselves and to play on.

Getting off the couch, start playing sports weekly, having fun together, and learning new skills. Scientific evidence tells us that it all adds up to an increased physical and mental health.

2. IMPACT MADE FOR PARTICIPATING GIRL LEADERS AND COACHES

The Girl Leaders, together with the Coaches, participated in 3 training days and a reflection & celebration afternoon.



Some of the trainees during an ISA-training (Feb 2023). Please note that the picture is for reporting purposes only, and cannot be shared online.

Girl Leaders learned leadership skills

The aim for participating Girl Leaders was to learn leadership skills by practising them.

They reported to have learned:

- How to lead a sports session that is fun, safe and active.
- And a variety of exercises and games, and adaptations to grow their sessions from just organising a technical warming-up and a match, to a fun session with multiple activities.
- The flow of a session, for example varying between light and intensive exercises.
- How to speak in front of a group
- To believe in themselves. Which increased their self-confidence.

Coaches learned mentoring skills

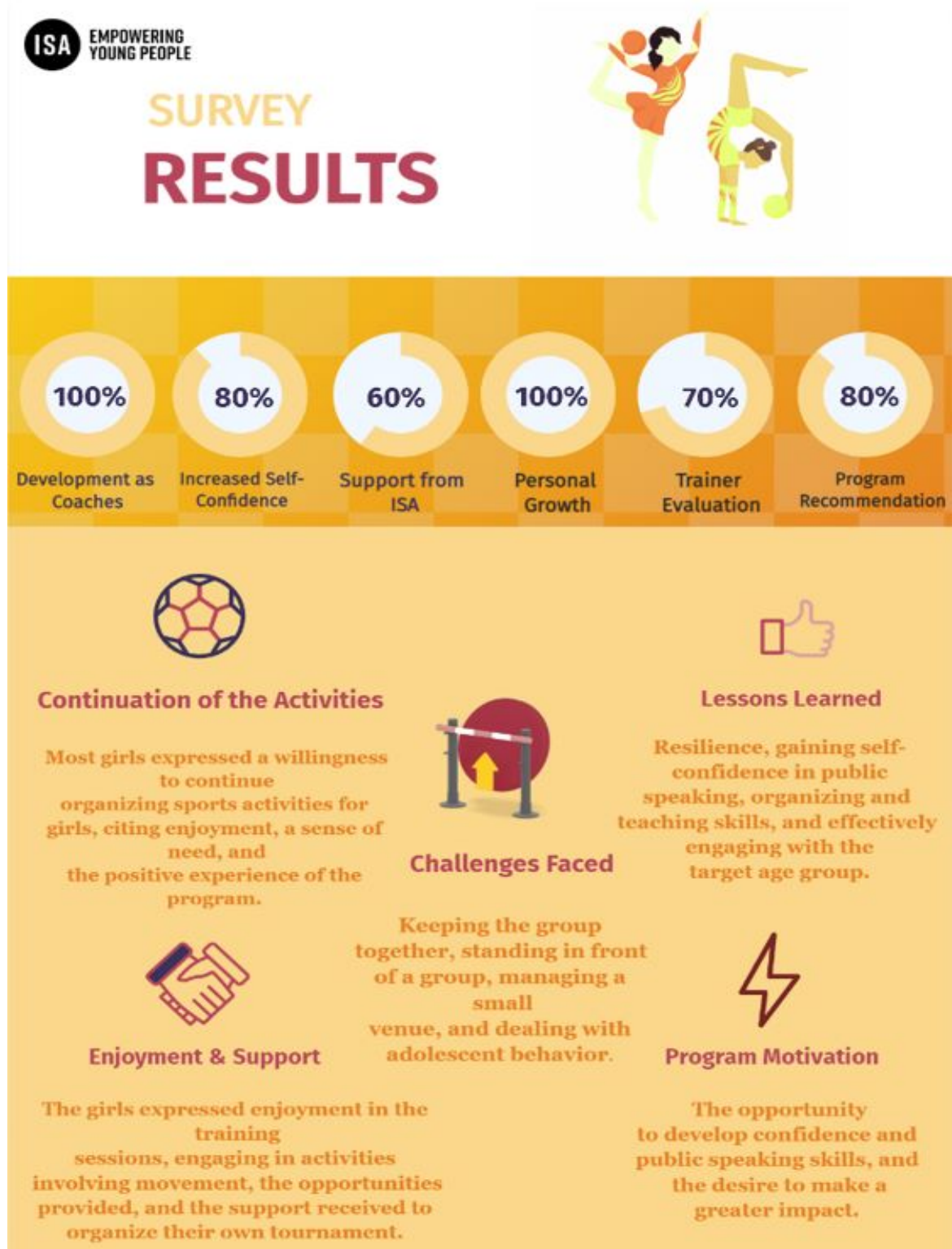
The aim for participating Coaches was to learn how to mentor the Girl Leaders, and how to incorporate a social goal in the organisation of an event. They reported to have learned:

- 6 out of 7 coaches mentioned they also have learned to become better sports leaders due to the project.
- To overcome the fear of starting something new; to recruit new girls and to just start organising a first session. Once they did that, they found out what they are capable of, and they became more and more confident in themselves. It was probably the biggest learning for the teams in Den Bosch and Tilburg.
- To change one's role from being the on leading sessions, to a mentoring role. All coaches find that very hard at the beginning, as it seems easier done if they just lead the sessions themselves. They have learned that mentoring means giving the Girl Leaders to start from their own skill-level, and that feedback helps them to incorporate it step by step into practice.

The group in Den Bosch took a different approach, they decided to lead all sessions together, but the coaches also took the role of making sure that everything was well-organised, in agreement with their organisation and with ISA.

When it comes to using the sports event to promote a social goal, most teams used the project goal as the social goal, which is: the added-value in having more spaces for girls to play sports. Jointly Women in Nijmegen added a secondary objective, which was to promote their event in the local media (before and after), to have it contribute to more positive news on minority groups that often get negative attention in the media.

In a survey, Girl Leaders and Coaches rated their development, as in 1) personal growth; 2) increased self-confidence; and 3) being a coach very positively, as well as the satisfaction of the project:



Also these testimonies reflect that both Girls Leaders and Coaches have become more confident, gained self-esteem and courage in leading sport sessions:

Girl Leader (21 years)

Even though I am leading sports sessions for 3 years already, as a student ROC Sport & Bewegen, it is for the first time I am having fun doing it. I was always tense when standing in front of a group, but with only girls I feel much more comfortable. I feel the training really helped me to improve as a sports leader.

Coach (23 years)

I really grew as a person during the project, and I can see the same in the other coaches and Girl Leaders. If I compare our first session and the last, we gained a professional attitude. And I really like that!

I have become more confident when leading a session. In addition, I learned to be more patient being a coach and mentoring others to do it, and how to make flyers to promote our activities and event.

This was also recognized by the managers or policy makers with the organisations we collaborated:

Manager Sports (45 years)

I can see that the Coaches and Girl Leaders are more confident and enthusiastic when I see them at work in our youth centers and on the fields. They expanded their knowledge and perspective. They look back at a new experience that was good, and that they are sharing with others in our organisation.

At ISA, we proudly look back to the first She Got Game programme, as we succeeded in engaging the Girl Leader- and Coach-Trainees, supporting them in building their leadership capacities in a way they will take with them the rest of their lives.

3. IMPACT MADE FOR PARTNERING ORGANISATIONS

As it was the first project of its kind, that ISA implemented in the Netherlands (instead of in countries on the African continent), all organisations agreed to also use the project to learn from jointly, to be able to establish a follow-up that will incorporate the learnings from this relatively short project. One of the major results of the project is that all partners expanded their team with new female coaches.

In addition, all four community organisation partners had their own motivation to join the She Got Game project. We summarise their objectives and results below:

Organisational Objective Jointly Women (Nijmegen):

Objective: To formalise their community organisation and make it more sustainable.

Results:

- Building a more sustainable organisation: registered as a legal organisation, that makes them independent in fundraising, and securing the football court for the girls.
- Successfully reaching out to a different target group: 12-16 year' olds (before they had activities for 16+ girls only). And they now feel more comfortable working with younger girls.
- They now have more team members who can lead sport sessions.

Coach (28 years)

The She Got Game project gave us a push forward, as we are now registered as a formal foundation. We gained professionalism, and expanded our network of (potential) supporters. Also our organisation has grown, and we created a safe space for a new group of 12+ girls . Although a 6-months has showed to be too short, the mentoring by ISA, that was tailored to our specific questions, was very valuable in achieving all of this.

Organisational Objective Sportbedrijf Tilburg:

Objective: To make their offer on community sports for teen girls more sustainable by having more female coaches who will lead activities for girls and young women.

Results:

- Tilburg successfully reached out to the new girls (10+) coming to their existing girls-only activities. A group of 16+ girl, and even some mothers, requested to start sessions for them too.
- At the moment of reporting Tilburg is still implementing the last bits of the project, as the responsible community coach in the organisation left during the project.

Luckily a very experienced community coach has taken over, and is really capable of motivating the Girl Leaders to organise a great event, and keep on learning during their weekly sessions.

- Sportbedrijf Tilburg started offering more and a greater variety of sports sessions for girls including ‘Challenge of the day’ for girls, in which they choose their own sports or physical activity. And after the summer holidays a girls-only basketball training will start.

Organisational Objective PowerUp073 (Den Bosch):

Objective: To learn successful approaches of Meaningful Youth Participation (i.e a process from participation and advising, to co-leading and leading) that also works for practical-educated youth.

Results:

- The Girl Leaders and Coaches organised everything on their own. And so, the team of Girl Leaders and Coaches designed, planned and implemented their own activities. A social worker and the mentor from ISA were present for questions, and encouragement, but kept themselves on the side-line. This is a great effort of the girls between 16 and 21 years’ old, and taught us that they not just participate or advise, but actually take the lead, if facilitated.

Organisational Objective Jointly Women (Amsterdam):

Objective: To start new sports sessions from scratch for and by girls from non-western descent, using the successful approach of Jointly Women Nijmegen.

Results:

- Team Amsterdam started the project with 2 coaches and 1 Girl Leader and along the way grow their team and the participating girls, as this has shown the best approach.
- It was easy to recruit girls, easier than in Nijmegen, because there are more potential participants. Within two weeks 13 girls got to know and joined the sessions. Girls reported to have made new friends, and feel less lonely.
- Search for an established local partner and successfully collaborate with Community Sports Amsterdam Oost and *ROC Sport & Bewegen Amsterdam*.

The above shows ISA’s expertise to support community organisations in improving their community sports sessions for teen-girls or young people in general, with a variety of services that run from training their coaches, to supporting staff in youth leadership and Meaningful Youth Participation, or linking up to ISA’s network where relevant.

4. RESULTS IN NUMBERS

One of our goals was to increase sports opportunities for teen girls in the four communities. From the outputs in numbers, you can see we did just that:

	Planned	Actual
Communities	4	7
Coaches	8	7
Girl Leaders	12	10
Girls played sports in weekly sessions and events	200	315

The project reached out to more communities than we had expected beforehand, due to the approach they took in Den Bosch, to separately lead sessions in 4 communities, and combine all groups in one end event.

We also reached more participating teen-girls in the activities and events, we aimed for a number of 200 (50 per event; and 20 per sports session). In total 315 teen-girls participated, and continue participating in the cities that continue their weekly offer.

On the other hand, we have less Coaches and Girl Leaders participating in the project than we planned for. Although we aimed for a total of 8 coaches and 12 Girl Leaders, a few dropped-out during the project.

Reasons for that included: The one coach stopped because she stopped working for Sportbedrijf Tilburg, while two Girl Leaders stopped because of a studies abroad that coincided with the project after rescheduling it, and one of the youngest participants stopped after the first training, because she found out this is not for her.

5. ACTIVITIES EXECUTED

6.1 Activities by ISA

These results were made possible because the ISA team executed the following activities:

	Activities	Results / Deliverables
1.	Fundraising for 1st She Got Game project and follow-up support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IT4Kids ● Nike ● Use learnings to design a follow-up project
2.	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selecting 4 community organisation partners (we have 3 organisations on the waiting list: 2 in Arnhem, 1 in Amsterdam).
3.	Training Girl Leaders and Coaches: combining theory, preparing a session, and practising it among the trainees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training She Got Game for facilitators incl. Handouts ● Handbook She Got Game for participants <p>Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sat 26 Nov 10am-4pm ● Sat 4 Feb 10am-4pm ● Sat 4 March 10am-4pm ● Sat 13 May (Celebrating Results & Looking Forward) 1pm-4pm
4.	Mentoring Girl Leaders & Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflection during training (on leading or mentoring) ● Encourage peer reflection ● Reflection when we visited sports sessions and events.
5.	Supporting organisations*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Start conversation with management/policy makers and coaches. ● Align with information and network according to specific questions.
6.	Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● She Got Game Sweaters ● Press Release format & pictures for partners ● Socials ● Video (by IT4Kids) ● Stories at Zijspeeltmee.nl ● Presentations
7.	Measuring impact & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youth Survey for girl participants ● Interviews with Girl Leaders and Coaches ● Reflection with participants ● Reports from partner-organisations ● Article at sportanddev.org and potentially other knowledge platforms to share lessons-learned

* This was added when we learned it was needed to meet organisational objectives that relate to sustainability after the project; and/or to have both the organisation and the implementers on the same page.

The feedback on the training from the Organisations, Coaches and Girl Leaders was very positive. Some quotes to summarise the feedback we received:

- “Each training separate topics are discussed to learn and to apply in our sports sessions. For example; How to recruit girls, preparing a sports session, making an action plan, like that. I think it’s really smart how they did that.”
- “The trainers from ISA are super compassionate. They very much take into account that Girl Leaders do not feel they must lead a perfect session right from the start, but that there is room for failure, improvement and learning. So when something does not immediately succeed, you do not feel disappointed too much. They will try to help you to do better next time, or they think along on what is possible instead.”
- “Our ISA-mentor Tim connects a lot and asks us how we are and if we need help. He gives a lot of opportunities to raise questions or concerns when need be. That is super nice. He checks and helps, and that really helped us forward and motivated us.”

A few things that several participants would want to change is to have more training sessions that take less long. Multiple trainees mentioned that the Saturdays from 10am to 16pm were tiring. Next time, having more shorter sessions will also help ISA’s objective forward to support the Coaches and Girl Leaders more at the start, to easier overcome the obstacle of fearing to just do it and start.

Moreover, they would want to have a longer project. For instance, it would be good to start with them when their sporting season starts, right after the summer holidays, for the entire year, with more training and mentoring at the start, and less when getting to the end of the season.

6.2 Promotion of the project

To support our learning, project goals, and promotion of the supporters of the project, we carried out the following promotional activities:

- During the fundraising phase, we did a mailing to multiple companies in Amsterdam, Den Bosch, Nijmegen and Tilburg and those within our network, asking for support by donating hardware to IT4Kids. A few companies indeed started to donate hardware to IT4Kids.
- Social media posts on progress and project stories at www.zijspeeltmee.nl with a reach of 1500 and an 75 people engaged.
- We shared a format for a press release to every partner to promote their event. For example, the event of Jointly Women was published in multiple local (online) newspapers with a reach of 66,000 people. One of the local newspapers approached them because they also wanted to publish a story after the event.
- Presentations at Erasmus+ Sports and Social Cohesion Labs and a workshop at Nike's headquarters to have Nike employees to experience the power of the She Got Game project:



- IT4Kids preferred to make a video of one of the activities for participating girls, but unfortunately that was not an option*. That is why they decided to make a short video to show the project's results during our Celebration Event 13 May. The video is meant to share results and to promote that.
- The She Got Game intervention in Den Bosch, also served as one of the examples in the European Sport & Social Cohesion Lab project. The sector Knowledge Platform Sportaddev.org is writing an elaborate article on the project results. Moreover, the She Got Game project got international recognition from partners from Ireland, Germany, Switzerland and the Czech Republic.

*Videos and social media posts require great visuals. To get these great visuals was harder than we had imagined, because we did not foresee that we could not take pictures / videos from girls' activities, because the parents won't allow it, or don't want them to be used online. **Note: Therefore, none of the pictures with minor girls on it can be shared, apart from reporting purposes.**

6. LEARNINGS FOR A FOLLOW-UP PROJECT

We very much used every opportunity in the project to learn. So that we can design a follow-up of She Got Game #NL that improves wherever relevant, but most of all, brings more sustainable results for girls in the communities.

a. Adaptations in the project

We made three adaptations in the project. Those are:

- **A different community partner in Amsterdam**

The initial partner who we planned to collaborate with was enthusiastic about participating in the project, but was not able to engage teen girls and young women from their network to participate for the duration of the entire project.

That is why we had to shift working with a different partner. The initiator from the successful community organisation in Nijmegen, Jointly Women, moved to Amsterdam two years ago, and she started a branch of Jointly Women in Amsterdam. Together with Community Sport Amsterdam Oost they created a weekly sport session for girls from scratch, following the successful approach of Nijmegen.

- **Delays in scheduling all the activities**

The two teams that normally work with policy makers or managers who take the lead (the municipality-related organisations in Den Bosch and Tilburg) were hesitant to start the activities at first. It is why we delayed the 2nd training, so everyone have had the chance to have started implementing sport sessions, for us to make the next step as a group during the next training session for Girl Leaders and Coaches. The groups from Den Bosch and Tilburg mentioned that they have learned a lot from the Jointly Women team, that they were organised so well, already prior to the project, and that they really were an inspiration to them.

- **Engage partner organisations more**

We learned during the start of the project that we had to engage the management / policy makers of the partnering organisations. In some partnerships we noticed that not everyone that had a part in the project was fully aware of the She Got Game objectives. And so we planned another meeting to sit together with the management and the coaches to identify the exact objectives of the organisation within the framework of She Got Game, and to plan activities towards that together. It helped to have everyone more engaged, and it enabled Coaches and Girl Leaders to do their work.

b. Sustainability: Impact beyond the project

As we do not wish that the project only temporarily created safe spaces for girls to play sports and come together, we supported the community organisations to plan for a follow-up.

Jointly Women in Nijmegen already did that successfully, and they have been continuing their weekly activities after the Ramadan ended. They are also very active in finding follow-up support. We were able to connect them with the Municipality of Nijmegen, who are willing to support their weekly activities for multiple years for 50% of the costs. They are now looking for match-funder.

The local media presence helped in that too, as they were approached by a potential private funder (that unfortunately selected another local project to support).

Also, the activities for and by girls are highly valued by the partners in Den Bosch and Tilburg. They already offered those, but in general faced obstacles in offering that continuously, and to have sufficient female trainers for that. Or to have teen-girls and young women taking the lead.

Manager Sports (45 years)

We got to know ISA as a new organisation to partner with in bringing valuable projects to girls. We would want to explore a follow-up.

For Amsterdam-Oost it will be difficult to have a sustainable organisation after just a short project, but it can very well be the start of something great. We hope the project helps to inspire the Coaches and Girls Leaders to continue their sports work for girls beyond the project. Also Jointly Women aspires to scale their successful model, and is motivated for a follow-up.

And finally, all partners mentioned the value of the exchange between different towns. For example Alex Bekkers from Powerup073 says: “Collaboration with other towns and Girl Leaders was a valuable addition in this project.”

c. Follow-up project She Got Game

To be able to work next steps, create more impact and sustain impact together, and to create a framework where girls and young women can participate in community sports activities on a weekly basis, we need to follow-up the relatively short She Got Game project.

All organisations already mentioned that they would like to take part in a follow-up project, led by ISA. As the project duration was considered too short, and it really helped partnering community organisations to take a next step.

We are currently working on a thorough evaluation to be able to incorporate the joint learnings into a new and longer project. And we look forward to sharing this project proposal with you and see if we can collaborate on this again.



Team Den Bosch and the winners of the event they organised (Den Bosch, May 2023).

At ISA we are committed to create new opportunities for girls and young women in community sports, and in investing in building capacities of the girls and the young women living in the communities that need extra girls-only sports services. As they are the ones who understand the need best and can best engage other girls in their community.