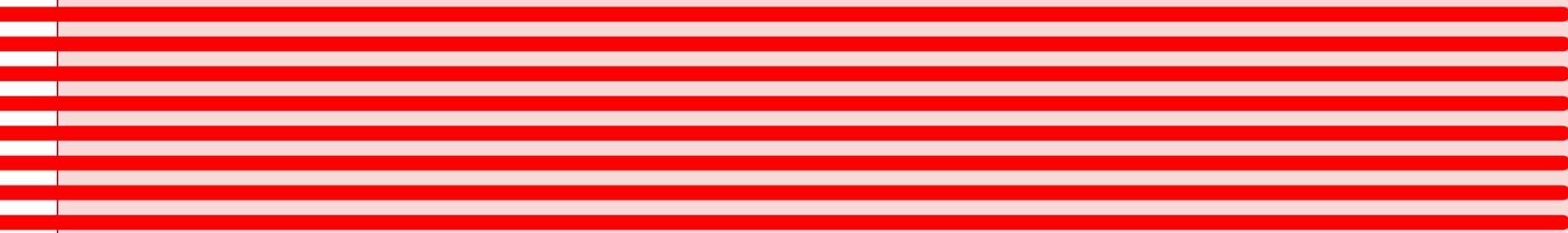


**GIRLS UNITED**  
**IMPACT REPORT**  
**SEPT 22–AUG 23**



**GIRLS UNITED**

**INTRO**



**EXPLORE**



**INSPIRE**



**EMPOWER**



**PARTNERS**



**3**

**8**

**19**

**26**

**33**

# WELCOME

## Message from our founder

From one World Cup to the next, women's football is now the fastest growing sport in the world. We have seen the game smash records and change attitudes for a whole generation of football fans.

At Girls United, we have spent the last seven years nurturing a love for the game in girls who have never had access to the sport, who have never had a chance to benefit from the power of belonging to football.

Speaking to our players, witnessing their very first professional match, I can see in them a sense of belonging that didn't exist before.



Not just to the game, but to a greater mission, to a community which allows them to believe in themselves. That's what GU is all about.

Whilst I'm buoyed by this growth and excitement, it is fundamental that we harness this momentum to drive real change.

Just as we were reminded of the realities for women and girls at the end of the World Cup, inequality still pervades not just in sport but in society and in the economy.

This year, we cemented Girls United as the organisation representing the grassroots game in the UK and in Mexico. As our players grow with the game, I know we are creating future leaders, on and off the pitch.

ROMINA CALATAYUD, CEO



# WHO WE ARE

Girls United **removes barriers** to football, building pathways that **empower girls and women** to fulfil their potential, on and off the pitch.

We are the global grassroots community that provides a sustainable future for women's football with social impact at it's core.



**GIRLS UNITED**

*Our Programmes*

## LOVE THE GAME

Working in schools to reach girls who are inactive and are excluded from sport, building their confidence and encouraging a love for the game.

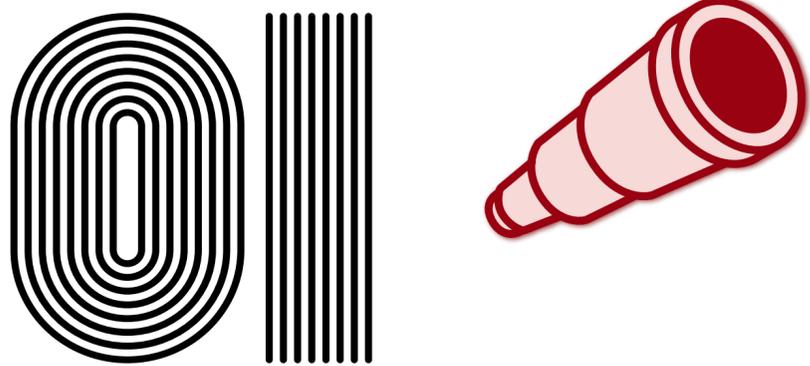
## PLAY LIKE A GIRL

Football sessions in welcoming environments for girls of all ages and abilities, focused on developing life skills and building a sense of community.

## CLUB

Allowing girls to play at a competitive level under the Girls United syllabus, combining football and life skills.

# EXPLORE



Exploring systemic change by opening pathways that allow for a sustainable future for girls in football



# INSPIRE



Inspiring communities that are inclusive, have a powerful voice and promote gender equality



# EMPOWER



Empowering individuals who have the skills to effect change and to be their best selves



# LONDON

29



LOCATIONS

in Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham

938



ENGAGED PLAYERS

actively participating in our weekly programmes

1,545



ENGAGED INDIVIDUALS

total number of participants in all activities (including adults and event attendees)

2,112



HOURS

racked up in active sessions

# MEXICO

4



LOCATIONS

Mexico City and Quintana Roo

228



ENGAGED PLAYERS

actively participating in our weekly programmes

943



ENGAGED INDIVIDUALS

total number of participants in all activities (including adults and event attendees)

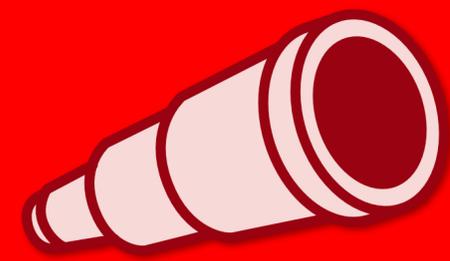
982



HOURS

racked up in active sessions

# OUR GLOBAL LEADER



# INTRODUCTION



Girls are not accessing sport at the same rate as boys. Those who do, drop out at twice the rate.

We are breaking down barriers so girls can access spaces **that are made for them** and **where they can be 100% themselves**.

We are building pathways that create sustainable impact and **give girls a journey in football** – from the first time they touch a football to becoming **agents of change in the game**.



## Key challenges identified for women and girls in sport:

- Lack of confidence and fear of being judged
- Not feeling safe outside
- Raising levels of inactivity
- Far distances to travel and lack of available sessions
- Unwelcoming environments
- Coaches that aren't representative or considerate
- More young people living in poverty
- Unprecedented levels of mental health issues
- Lack of support to value sport at home

## CASE STUDY

# Play Like A Girl

- 🎯 In Mexico City **82% of our girls** had never been in a space made specifically for girls to play sport.
- 🎯 Through Play Like A Girl we engaged **182 girls across 459 hours** of delivery.
- 🎯 In the UK, **68% of girls** say a fear of feeling judged by others is a barrier to sport.
- 🎯 In London, our grassroots sessions **engaged 240 girls across 375 hours** of delivery.

## Ellie's Story

After watching Chelsea Women play at Stamford Bridge, Ellie was keen to try playing football more seriously. Ellie's school doesn't include football in their PE sporting curriculum so we looked for a community option that would allow Ellie to play in a friendly, welcoming atmosphere, and where girls were ***included as a primary participant and not an afterthought.***

Ellie started her footballing journey at the age of 6 on Peckham Rye with Girls United Play Like a Girl sessions every Sunday morning from September 2021.

After a year at Play Like a Girl she was invited to join the Girls United U9s team when she was 7 years old. Ellie was nervous at first, worried that she wouldn't be able to play in proper matches. But with a bit of encouragement from the coaches and her teammates, she made her debut for the U9s team.



Since then, Ellie has been a regular in the team, welcoming new teammates, encouraging others and growing into her role as a Girls United footballer.

Ellie is very proud of her journey and progress so far with Girls United, and has even delivered a Show and Tell project at school which focused on her involvement in the Tiny Buzz marketing activity with VW.

ELLIE'S DAD



**IN MEXICO CITY** 

**82% OF OUR**

**GIRLS HAD NEVER**

**BEEN IN A SPACE**

**MADE SPECIFICALLY** 

**FOR GIRLS TO**

**PLAY SPORT.**



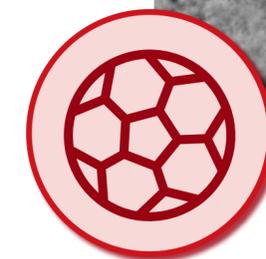
# Girls United Takeover Wembley

We partnered with Nike FC and Girls Super League to host a unique experience for **160 girls** from across London at the home of football, Wembley Stadium. Hosted by dynamic duo, Mollie and Rosie Kmita, this once-in-a-lifetime event was a celebration of grassroots girl's football in London.

[Watch the highlights](#)

*“Being able to have a load of our players taking part in sessions on the hallowed turf at Wembley was crazy. I’m still not sure if the girls realise the magnitude of that experience. Growing up, the thought of going to Wembley, let alone standing on the pitch, was a dream. To stand in the centre of the pitch and to just look around at the whole stadium gave me goosebumps.”*

LEE WEBB, PROGRAMME LEAD





**GROWING UP, THE  
THOUGHT OF GOING  
TO WEMBLEY,**

**☉☉ LET ALONE**

**STANDING ON THE**



**PITCH, WAS  
A DREAM.**

# Mexico City Launch

We launched Girls United in Mexico City in the neighbourhood of Iztapalapa, now engaging **83 players** and their families in one of our fastest growing clubs, offering a unique space for girls.

Through the **Jugamos Juntas initiative**, funded by Laureus and Nike, we have created a unique community that is giving girls access to football sessions that build their confidence.

*“Before coming to Girls United, Sam had trouble adapting and fitting in at school. Now she has found her best friends here and that has been very important for her. Girls United is a dream for all parents of girls because it goes beyond football, it is an environment where they find a place to feel connected to what they really like. We are so grateful. Sam has changed a lot since she joined the team. Here she feels really happy.”*

MARCO CIGARROA, PAPÁ DE SAM, IZTAPALAPA

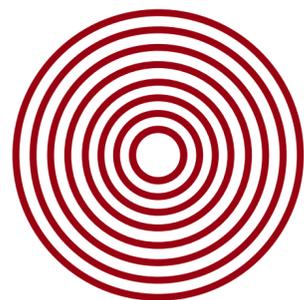


CHICAS UNIDAS

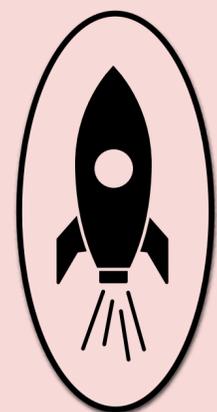
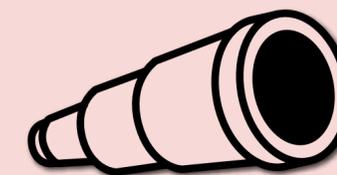


## Key impact and stats:

- 🎯 **Only 60% of girls** in Mexico City felt capable of playing a football match. A year later, **94% of girls feel confident to do so.**
- 🎯 Girls United has helped grow a community with 85 engaged parents and guardians, reshaping the meaning of supportive environment for girls. **100% of parents and guardians rank Girls United as a 5/5 in importance for their daughters development.**
- 🎯 We also supported the growth of 7 female role models and local leaders.



**100% OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS RANK**



**GIRLS UNITED  
AS A 5/5 IN  
IMPORTANCE FOR  
THEIR DAUGHTERS  
DEVELOPMENT.**





# LDN/MEX Girls United Exchange

Team members from London travelled to Mexico to share approaches to coaching and social leadership.

**Connor**, London Programme Lead has been at GU since 2020, and runs our schools programme, now in 15 primary schools.

**Esme Sommerside** joined as a player when she was 14 at London's very first session. She is now a coach while studying Physics at Oxford.

Bringing together our international team shows how the power of football transcends borders!

CHICAS UNIDAS

GIRLS  
UNITED

## ANÍMATE A MÁS

# Social Impact Through Football in Quintana Roo

In Quintana Roo, one in 10 children under five suffer from malnutrition. This problem is even more acute in the rural areas of the region where we work.

'*Animate A Más*' gave us the opportunity to transform this reality in our communities.

Our teams in Quintana Roo participated in the Disney programme, focused on building healthy habits, and increasing knowledge on how to have balanced, healthy meals.

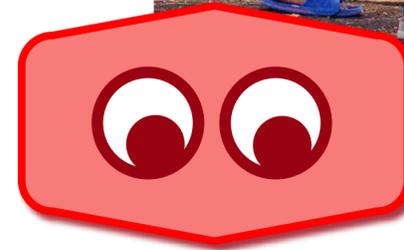
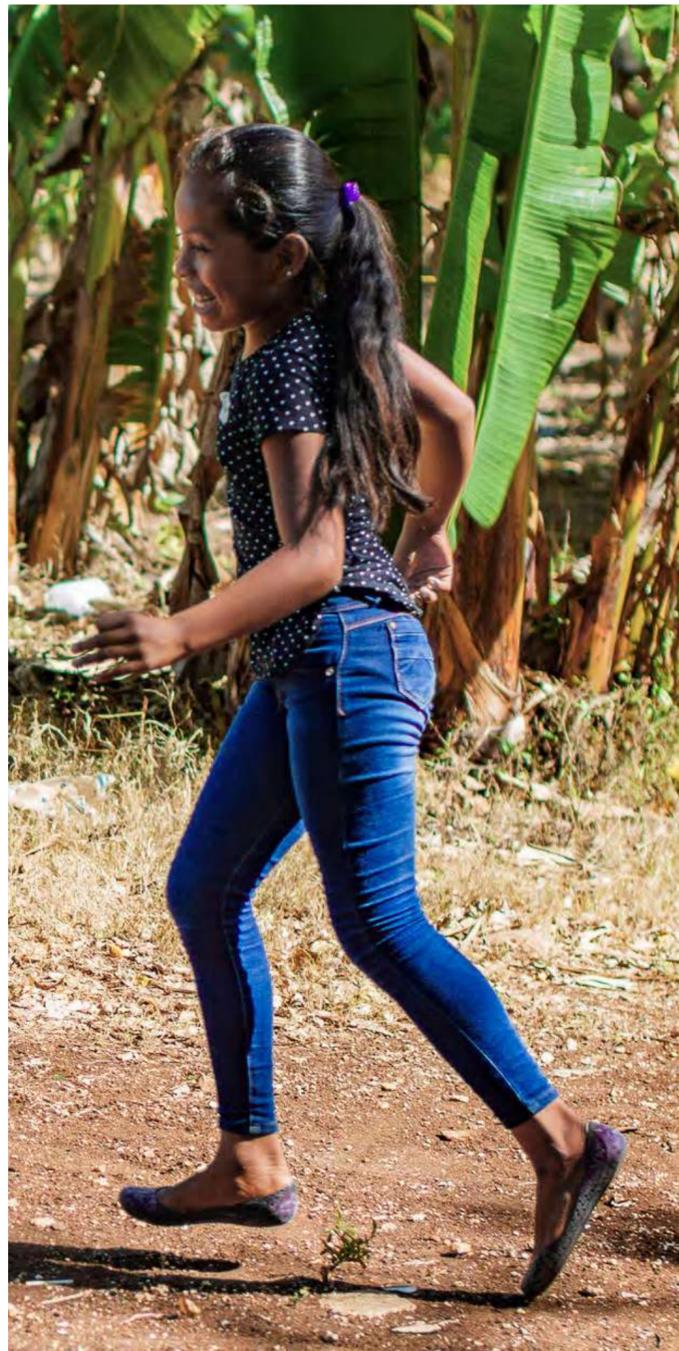
### Key impact and stat:

- 🎯 **98%** of players from Quintana Roo consider their **confidence and self-esteem has increased** since joining the programme.





**Alexa, Quintana Roo Lead,** was awarded Outstanding Women Award for her Legacy in Sport 2023.



We brought Girls United sessions to **25 girls and boys** from agricultural communities who migrate following the production of sugarcane in the state of Quintana Roo. These children come from different states of Mexico to accompany their parent’s work in this agricultural area.

**“The coaches have been a great help to me. They guide us on many things, such as handling our emotions. They give us motivation to never give up. On the field I have fun, I feel complete and free to be myself.”**

**ADRIANA TAMAY, BACALAR**



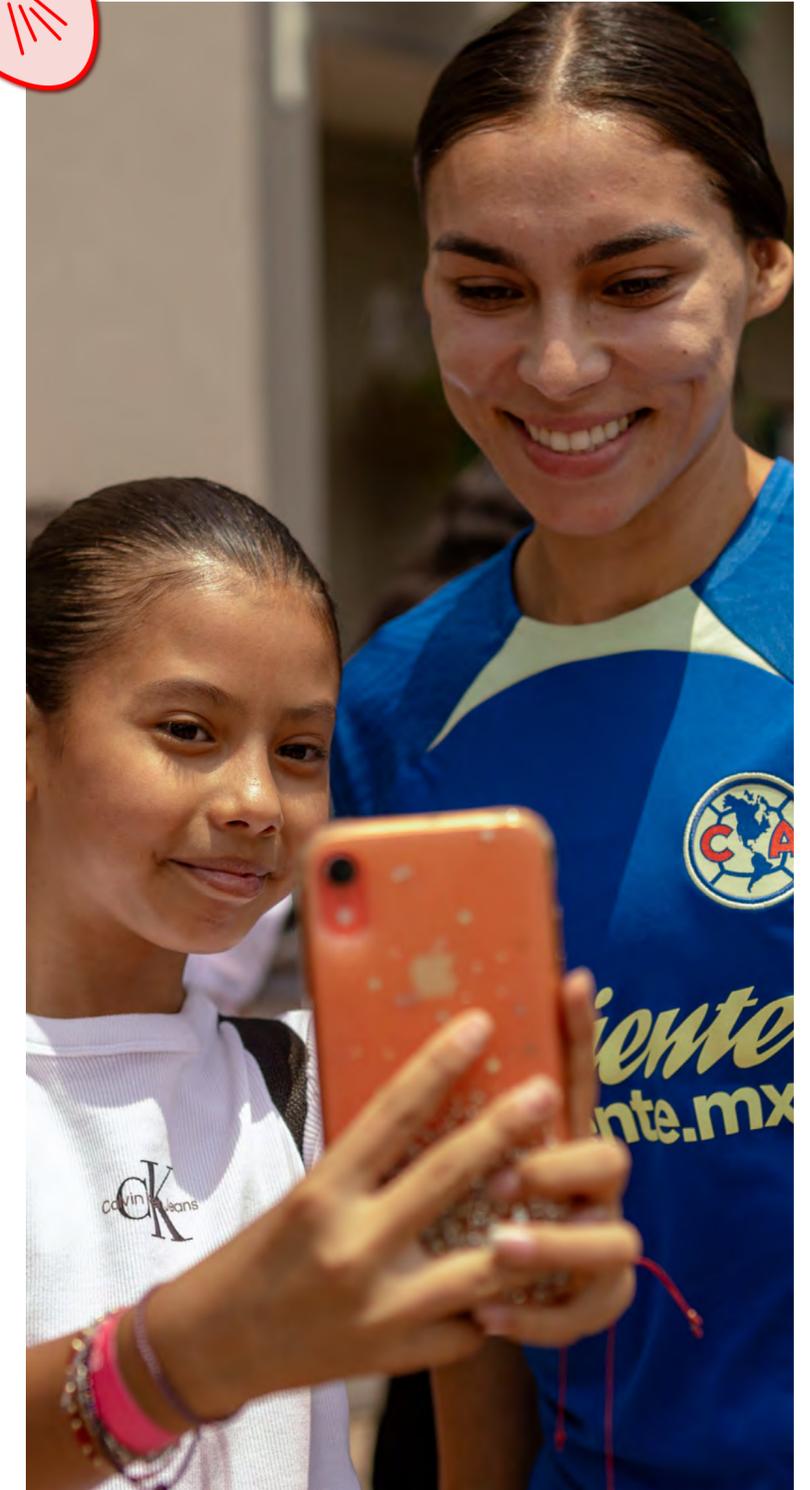
**CHICAS UNIDAS**

## INTRODUCTION



We are a **global community** of players, coaches, families and supporters who believe in using the power of football to create gender equality.

We believe that everyone can inspire those around them and create change. Each girl, coach, volunteer and parent is a role model for our community – so we give them a voice and a platform.





# WORLD CUP CAMPAIGN

Ahead of the 2023 World Cup, the Girls United community set a mission: **to cover the distance between our pitch in Peckham and the Lionesses first game in Australia.**

Not only did we close the gap between the grassroots and the pros, we cycled, walked, ran and played enough football to cover over 12,000 miles and raised **£10,262** in the process.

During the campaign, we got more girls playing and took over Boxpark.

Our girls shared how important it was for them to see their role models on the world stage.



## CASE STUDY

### Club Chetumal

Club Chetumal, led by **Alexa, Nahomi, Xime** and **Yeni**, grew in numbers and entered more competitions than ever before. Hosting two teams competing in leagues, one of our U14s are playing in a boys league as there are no competitions for girls in the area.

Some wins, some losses, the girls are smashing it – demonstrating their confidence, resilience, turning heads and **inspiring the community around them to uproot gender norms and see girls as equals.**



**73%**

of players at the club dream of being professional footballers

IWD2023

# International Women's Day 2023

Girls United held the fifth edition of our annual International Women's Day tournament, with over **300 attendees** helping us reach the fundraising target of **£6,000**, in support of safe spaces for girls and young women in football.

*"Make Space"* was developed in response to recent findings by Women in Sport, showing that **49% of girls surveyed don't feel safe exercising in their local park** and **79% indicated that access to appropriate changing facilities and toilets had a direct impact** on their decision to participate in sport or not.

The annual International Women's Day tournament is one of several celebrations that took place across London and Mexico. Throughout the week, girls attending partner schools in South London enjoyed active workshops aimed at redefining female role models.

[Find out more](#)



**300**  
attendees



IWD2023



Across the Atlantic, **65 players and over 150 supporters attended a Girls United International Women's Day** youth tournament, the only of its kind in the Quintana Roo region of Mexico.

In Mexico City, girls between 4 and 15 years old had their first competitive experience through a 5v5 tournament, while **Monica Rodriguez** shared her best technical advice. The professional soccer player, Champion of the 2018 Apertura Tournament and one of the emblematic players of the BBVA MX Women's League, talked about her experiences, biggest challenges, and motivated the girls to strive to fulfil their dreams.

[Find out more](#)

## EL AZTECA

# CHICAS UNIDAS AT THE AZTECA

Club America's friendly match against Real Madrid at the iconic Azteca stadium was particularly special, as two of our Global Ambassadors, **Caroline Weir** and **Monica Rodriguez** faced one another.

Twelve players and coaches from Quintana Roo were invited by Weir to the game – their first ever trip to a stadium.

Having first met the group during her visit to South Mexico in 2022, Weir welcomed the girls and made sure to hand out the tickets in person before the game.

[Find out more](#)



CHICAS UNIDAS



## Our first ambassador for Mexico

Just days before this fixture, Monica Rodriguez became our **first Mexico-based Ambassador**, and her impact was almost immediate as she welcomed 70 members of the Iztapalapa community at Club America's friendly against UEFA Champions League Winners FC Barcelona. Two players were even given the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of walking out onto the pitch with the teams as mascots.

**"We, as professional players, have a very important role in promoting the sport, and being role models for the girls who see us and want to be like us. That is a great motivation for me."**

MONICA RODRIGUEZ

[Find out more](#)



PROUDLY  
SERVED

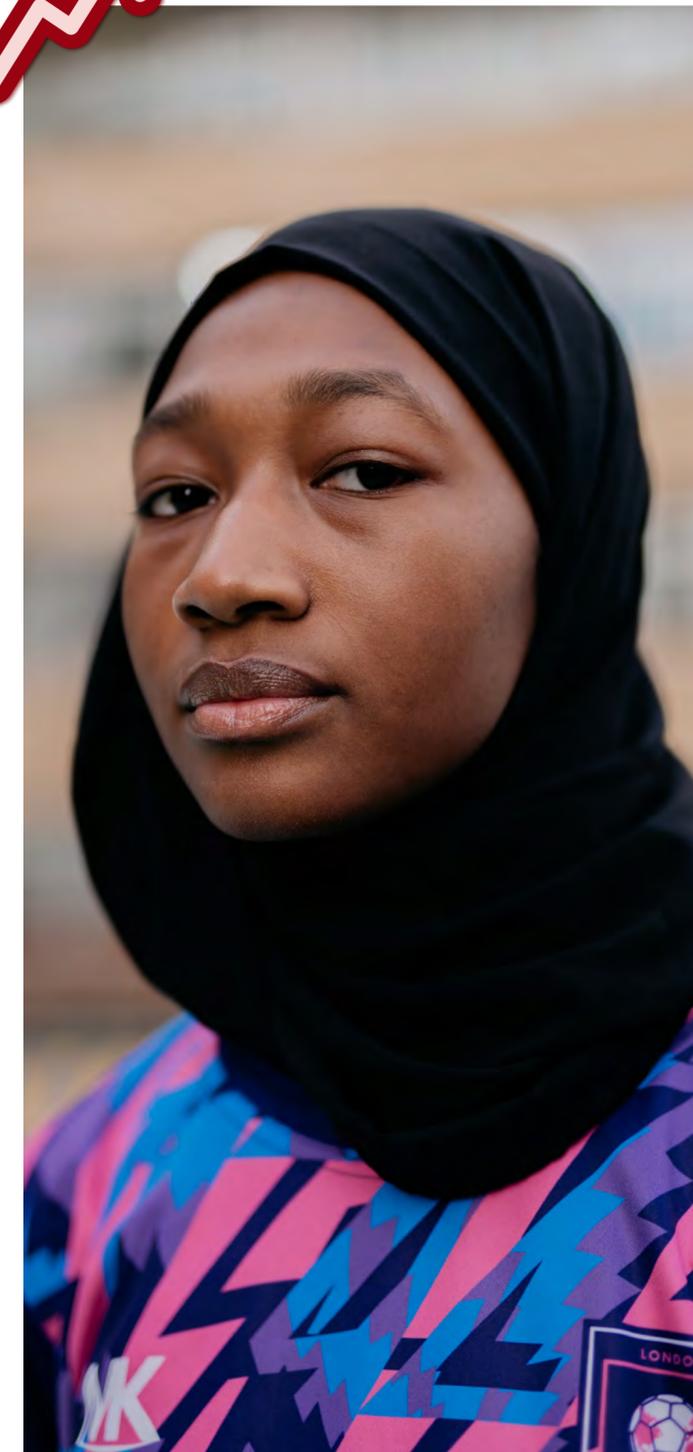


# INTRODUCTION



Our mission is to **support individuals to reach their potential**. Along the journey, we build their confidence and develop essential life skills needed to succeed on and off the pitch.

Girls and women face socioeconomic and cultural challenges that can affect their wellbeing and create barriers in their individual development. By creating a sense of **belonging to a community** that supports them to be their best selves, we can overcome those barriers.



CASE STUDY

### Imarn's Story

In 2022-23, GU had **five teams** playing in the local Tandridge League, with players building a real love for football, showing up to play rain or shine and dreaming to be the next generation of Lionesses.

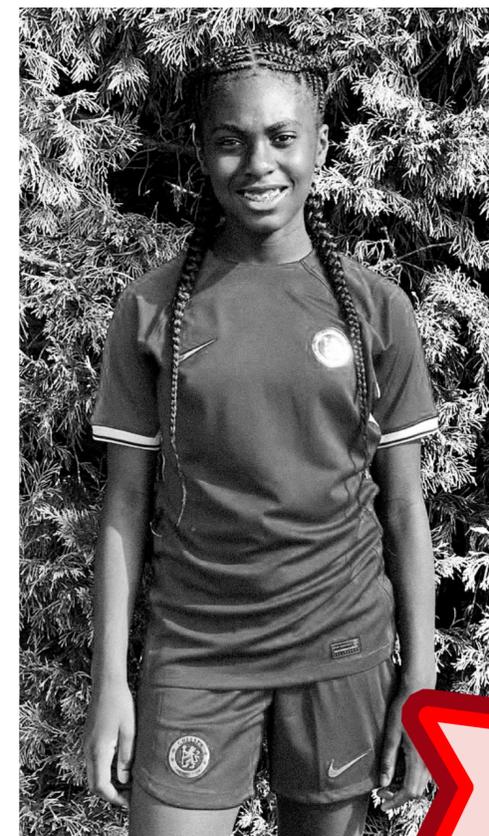
Our players have also become role models of the community with some going on to play in district teams, Emerging Talent Centres and represent our local boroughs in the London Youth Games.

The programme was supported by a unique partnership with Alleyn's School, who across the season hosted our Coach Development workshops, including 100FC and invited GU to coach at their "**Alleyn's Academy**".

Imarn started her footballing journey with Girls United and has since gone on to **sign for Chelsea**.

**"You're one of the main reasons Imarn is at Chelsea. You shaped Imarn not just as a footballer but as a person."**

IMARN'S PARENT





**Girls United Team (clockwise from top left):** Sandy Aguilar, Andrea Ruiz, Veronica Soto, Ximena Bracho, Itzel Rayón, Karina Villarreal, Yeni Ake, Romina Calatayud, Lee Webb, Connor Hearty, Greer-Aylece Robinson, Yamili Salazar, Nahomi Hoyos, Ryan Dempsey, Hayley Moles, Ana De Pellegrin, Gabriela Perez, Abigail Ingram, Robert Wright and Josh Emerson.

# Workforce development

In Mexico, the economic participation of women of the legal working age is 41.7%. At Girls United Mexico, 100% of the staff and coaches are local women. They are **real agents of change** in their communities and have found opportunities to develop careers in sport with Girls United giving them **economic empowerment**.

In London, we celebrated at the Kickstarter Event for our participation in the scheme to employ 16-24-year-olds on Universal Credit, and shared our expertise in getting more young people into coaching and creating a career pathway, alongside supporting London FA with a 100FC workshop at Allyn's School.



“The girls’ first game was a moment that marked the team. They all wanted to give their all and their efforts were rewarded when the match went to penalties. The girls were afraid to shoot but they all stepped forward, except Carla. She felt insecure and didn’t want to shoot for fear of missing. When I told her I trusted her, she took the penalty, scored it and thanked me. Giving them the confidence and security to believe in themselves is something incredible. I have had many experiences as a coach but I have only felt this impact at Girls United.”

KARINA, CDMX COACH



## CASE STUDY

### Breaking Limits

Our participation in the Breaking Limits programme saw 48 coaches receive online training to develop as coaches.





IT'S GREAT TO SEE GIRLS  
THAT ARE SOMETIMES 



QUIET HAVE A  
SPACE WHERE  
THEY CAN TRY  
SOMETHING NEW



WITHOUT FEAR.

IN THE MEDIA

**Nov 2022 – GU Launch Away kit**

**Girls United London Launch Special Edition Away Kit - The Bowie Kit**

Girls United launch their new London club away kit inspired by a cultural icon.

Real Madrid and Scotland star Caroline Weir has got her new Girls United London away kit and you have the opportunity to join her in wearing this unique design with pride!

The new kit and bespoke typeface and numbering were designed by multi-award winning creative studio Play and was chosen by the players from the club.

Inspired by their South London community and paying tribute to one of Brixton's most celebrated icons, the Bowie kit connects the organisation to their roots and raises

**Dec 2022 – Guardian feature**

**Girls United: creating pathways for young players from London to Mexico**

Global organisation founded by Romina Calatayud helps girls make friends and do what they love - play football

Girls United has expanded to London with the emphasis on building locally led pathways to develop.

**Mar 2023 – IWD Tournament**

**Girls United Hosted Over 200 Grassroots Players in a 5-A-Side International Women's Day Celebration**

Women supporting women, one kick at a time.

**Jul 2023 – World Cup Fundraiser Sky Sports**

**Romina Calatayud**  
Girls United Founder & CEO

All tickets for Lionel Messi's potential debut for Inter Miami in Leagues Cup are sold out.

**Jul 2023 – Women's World Cup Quote in the Guardian & Observer**

**'We've come so far from saying women can't play football': girls gather to cheer on the Lionesses**

clicked. I felt so much admiration for those women on the pitch who had carried on playing, and decided to start playing again."

The team watched the match together at the Regent Pub, south London, which has become a valuable partner in providing a safe and welcoming space for women and non-binary players, fans and allies.

The Girls United FA London group completed an epic #PeckhamtoBrisbane challenge - walking 10,262 miles to celebrate the start of this year's World Cup. The girls walked the final mile before kick-off, ready for a match-watching party to celebrate, as their football heroines made their debut in Australia.

**Mar 2023 – N+Media visit Girls United in Mexico City**

**Nury Novelo**  
Reportera N+

**Mar 2023 – Romina named in las 30 Promesas de los Negocios**

**Aug 2023 – World Cup Fundraiser BBC News**

**Robert Wright**  
Girls United

**Jul 2023 – Women's World Cup Quote in Inews**

**TV deals for women's football 'not working', says former Lionesses star Karen Carney as World Cup kicks off**

As the Women's World Cup gets underway, broadcast arrangements for regular women's league matches and grassroots investment remain key concerns for those involved in the sport

Josh Emerson, global marketing and communications manager at Girls United, a grassroots football organisation, said: "For this World Cup to be as successful from a grassroots perspective, grassroots needs to be thought about and it needs to be included in a lot of the conversations that are happening and a lot of the investment that's going into the game. So whether that's investment into the very top level [such as] TV deals and sponsorship deals, grassroots needs to be included very explicitly in that."

He added that while Girls United saw a spike in interest in the

**Aug 2023 – World Cup Fundraiser France 24**

**MÁS INFORMACION EN FRANCE 24.COM**

Whilst we like to do most of our talking on the pitch – giving a voice and platform to our communities is of upmost importance in raising awareness, empowering future generations and changing narratives. [Find out more](#)



# **GIRLS UNITED X NIKE**





# LOVE THE GAME

Working with **588 participants** across 15 primary schools in South London on a weekly basis, the Love the Game programme focuses on **building girls' confidence** both on and off the pitch. By collaborating with schools and delivering active workshops and tournament days, more girls are discovering a love for football. Beyond that, we support teaching staff to deliver female-inclusive football and sports – leaving a lasting impact and legacy beyond the Girls United sessions.

Girls that love the game, will change the game.

**“100% of our girls in KS2 are participating with football in some way during the school day. In large part this is due to the aspirational nature of the work you guys have done with our girls who turn up and are successful at competitions.”**

THOMAS MCQUILLAN



**GIRLS UNITED**



## Love the Game miniseries

The Love the Game miniseries follows the player journey from classroom to pitch and everything in between, highlighting the South London community that has been created through the delivery of weekly sessions by GU coaches.

Shot by an all female crew, the creation process provided unique learning opportunities for our participants to interact with photographer Ellie Ramsden, director Eleanor Grace Hann, and videographer Lauren Mccollin, a team of inspiring role models for our players.

[Episode 1](#) | [Episode 2](#) | [Episode 3](#)

**LOVE  
THE  
GAME**





## Love the Game zine

Using the incredible photography captured by **Ellie Ramsden** throughout the year at school sessions, active workshops and game days, the zine tells the story of the Love the Game community.

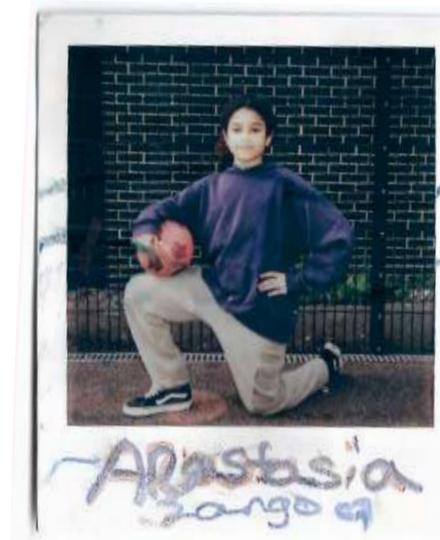
Following the player journey from discovering football to playing on a regular basis, we highlight the programme's impact on our participant's **confidence** and understanding of competition.

[View the zine](#)



Blanca

LOVE  
THE  
GAME  
2023



Arastasia  
2020 09



Shan

# THE LIONESSES

## Lionesses World Cup Kit Shoot

Two of our players, **Amira'li** and **Jameela**, were invited by Nike to take part in the [kit shoot](#) for the new Lioness World Cup kit and they absolutely smashed it!

It is an honour for GU players to feature alongside an inspiring group of leaders of women's football. Making a difference on and off the pitch, putting female players in the spotlight.



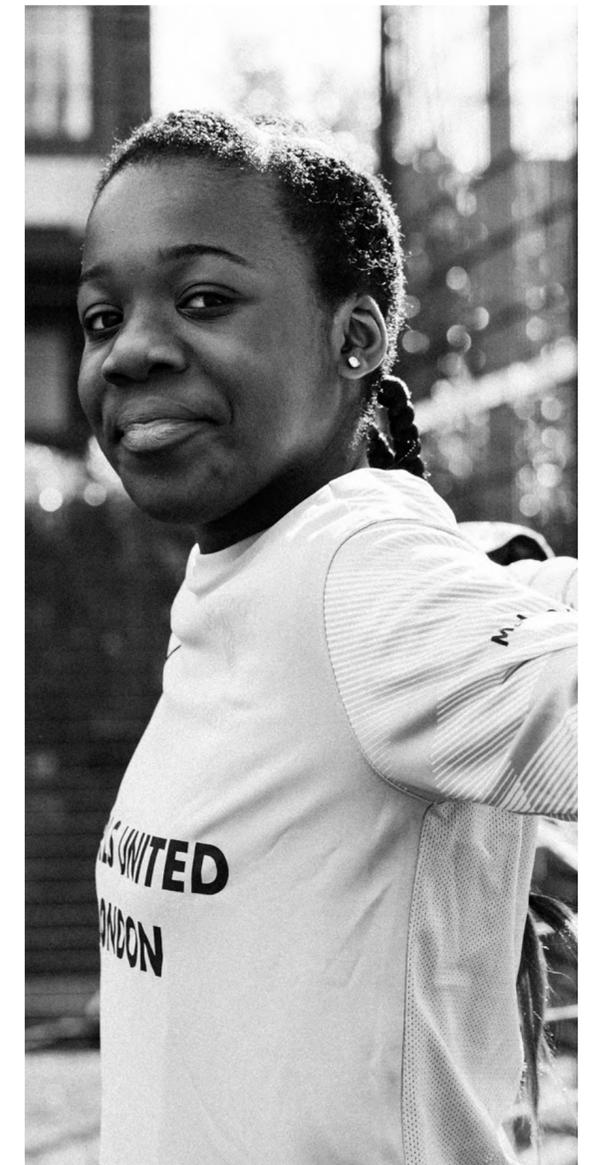
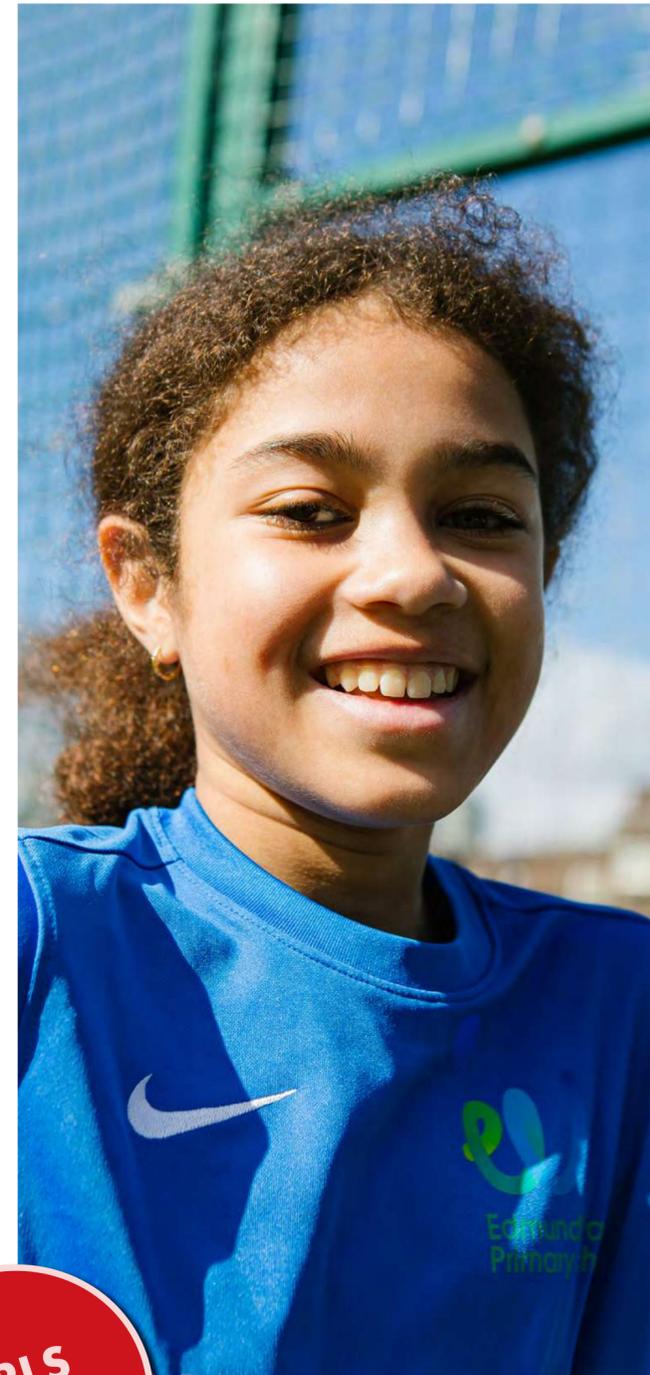
# THANK YOU

## Our Partners & Funders

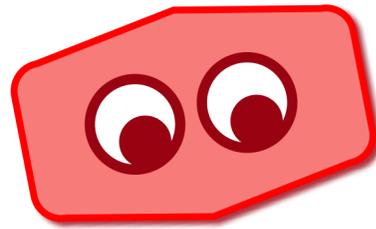


11 Team Sport  
 11 Legends  
 Alcaldía de Iztapalapa  
 Allyn's School  
 Anímate A Más  
 Art of Football  
 Beyond Sport  
 Black Prince Trust  
 Boxpark  
 Common Goal  
 DIF Estatal Quintana Roo  
 Dulwich Hamlet FC  
 Goldman Sachs  
 Hawkeye Innovations and Pulselive Ltd

Laureus Sport For Good  
 London Youth Sports Trust  
 Mitre  
 Municipio de Bacalar  
 Nike  
 Player Doce  
 Powerleague  
 Rexona  
 SIPINNA  
 Starling Bank  
 StreetGames  
 Studio Play  
 VERSUS  
 Volkswagen



# LOOK AHEAD



As women's football breaks records and grows at an unprecedented rate, we are committed to representing the grassroots to ensure no girl gets left behind. Every World Cup win starts with a grassroots dream.

Our mission is to embed community values in the future of the game by ensuring inclusion and long-term journeys for girls in football.

### The 2022-2026 Girls United Strategy aims to:

- Deepen our impact
- Build a sustainable model
- Create an inspiring identity



# A huge thank you!



Thank you to the team, coaches and volunteers who made this year possible!

**Abigail Ingram** – London Manager

**Alexa Viera** – Quintana Roo Lead

**Ana De Pellegrin** – London Marketing Officer

**Andrea Ruiz** – Mexico Manager

**Connor Hearty** – London Programme Lead

**Gabriela Perez** – Bacalar Coach

**Greer-Aylece Robinson** – London Programme Lead

**Hayley Moles** – London Coach

**Itzel Rayon** – CDMX Coach

**Josh Emerson** – Global Marketing and

Communications Manager

**Karina Villareal** – CDMX Lead

**Lee Webb** – London Programme Assistant

**Nahomi Hoyos** – Chetumal Coach

**Robert Wright** – London Programme Lead

**Romina Calatayud** – Chief Executive Officer

**Ryan Dempsey** – London Coach Development Lead

**Sandy Aguilar** – Miguel Hidalgo Lead

**Veronica Soto** – CDMX Coach

**Ximena Bracho Font** – Mexico Marketing Officer

**Ximena Colli** – Chetumal Coach

**Yamili Salazar** – Bacalar Lead

**Yeni Ake** – Mexico Coach and Physiotherapist

And a special thank you to the team at **Playing Field**, for designing this report and helping us share our work in empowering girls and women in the world of sport and beyond.

## PLAYING FIELD

Branding. Design. Creative.



Get in touch to join our community and support our mission to change the world through football:

Email | [hello@girlsunitydf.org](mailto:hello@girlsunitydf.org)  
 Social Media | [@girlsunitydf](https://www.instagram.com/girlsunitydf)  
 Website | [girlsunitydf.org](https://www.girlsunitydf.org)