



WORLD  
RUGBY

# RUGBY – A GLOBAL SPORT FOR ALL

THE SOCIAL RETURN ON  
INVESTMENT IN RUGBY



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# WORLD RUGBY'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-25

## with participation a core component of the next decade of growth

World Rugby is an organisation and a movement – everyone has a say, and everyone should feel connected with the sport, its advancement and success.

World Rugby leads and guides a sport that has enjoyed significant growth over recent years – across participation, audiences, markets and revenues.

The Strategic Plan for 2021-25 will drive the organisation forwards into the next phase of growth by making it more relevant and accessible across four strategic pillars, competition, participation, engagement and the game. All underpinned by a relentless focus on player welfare.

### Participation has three focus areas

- Build on recent success to activate new opportunities and grow the number of active registered female players globally



- Continue the broad global development of rugby in untapped countries

- Keep participants in the game
- Return to pre-pandemic participation levels by 2023

# WORLD RUGBY CONTINUES TO INVEST

to achieve these participation objectives



Our game-changing actions



Provide services to unions and regional associations to build capacity and capability



Creation of a Union **Development Toolkit** to support stronger unions



Targeted investment (e.g. Union Fund) to support strategic initiatives



Investment of **US\$630m+** projected into the sport between 2020-23



Deliver World Rugby programmes and campaigns



Expansion of 'Get Into Rugby' and 'Impact Beyond' participation programmes

This is underpinned by **player welfare** as the **priority** throughout all participation plans and initiatives

**US\$3 million+**

committed to scientific research over the last five years, which includes:

**US\$1.2 million+**

on **player welfare** research

**US\$1 million**

on **injury prevention** research



# WE HAVE THEREFORE DEVELOPED A MODEL

to see rugby, and all its benefits, more widely-recognised and promoted

## VISION for social value

To develop a business case that proves the benefits of global rugby participation for all to strengthen the brand of the sport, deliver sustainable investment, and build commercial partnerships in rugby.

## HOW the model was built

The World Rugby model, developed in collaboration with Portas Consulting, estimates the social value of rugby across all Member Unions. It has been developed on a framework that measures the health, social and economic value created by grassroots rugby participation to individuals, communities and nations.

The framework and its underpinning methodology\* have been benchmarked against other best-practice approaches and have been peer reviewed by an academic panel.

*\*For any further questions about the methodology, please contact World Rugby*



### Influence key decision making

Support government and international institutions in setting the right policy and budgets to deliver against priorities.



### Change perceptions

Publicise the positive value of rugby to parents and participants and change mindsets on the benefits of playing our game.



### Generate insights and actions

Increase the impact and value of grassroots delivery by understanding which areas create the most value and why.



### Incentivise investment

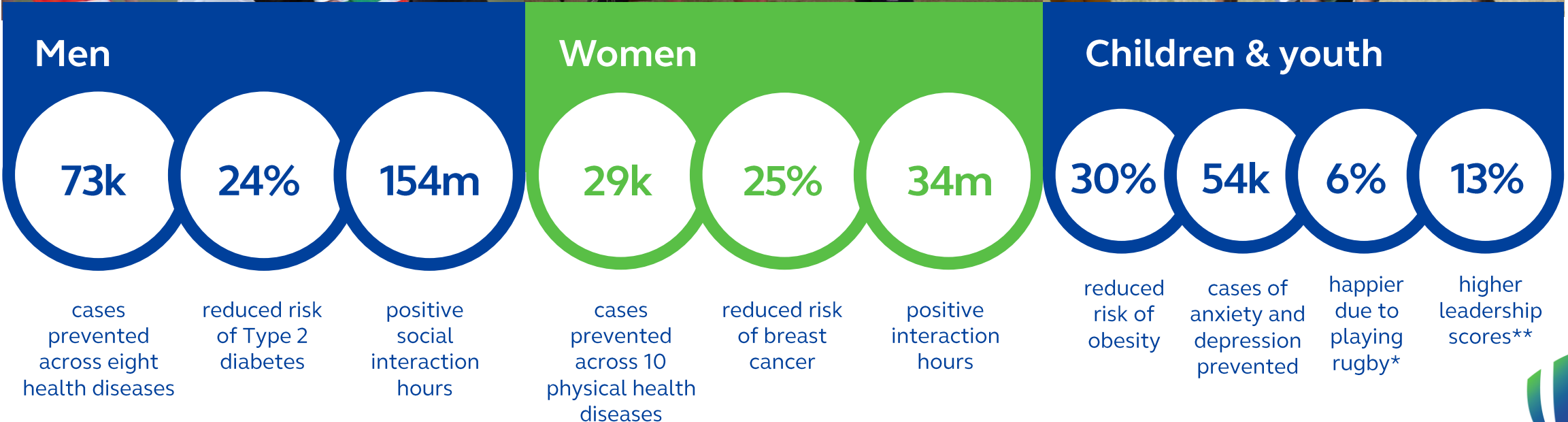
Influence private and public sector to increase investment in growing participation at a national and local community level.





# THE SOCIAL VALUE OF RUGBY

# RUGBY BRINGS SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS TO ALL PARTICIPANTS



\* & \*\* source: Sport Impacts Children, UK



These participation benefits develop

# BETTER INDIVIDUALS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES AND MORE RESILIENT NATIONS

## Individuals

Rugby participation improves health, increases life satisfaction and develops educational attainment

**US\$2,098** per adult player

## Communities

Community clubs improve social cohesion, increase trust and create inclusive environments

**~US\$305k**

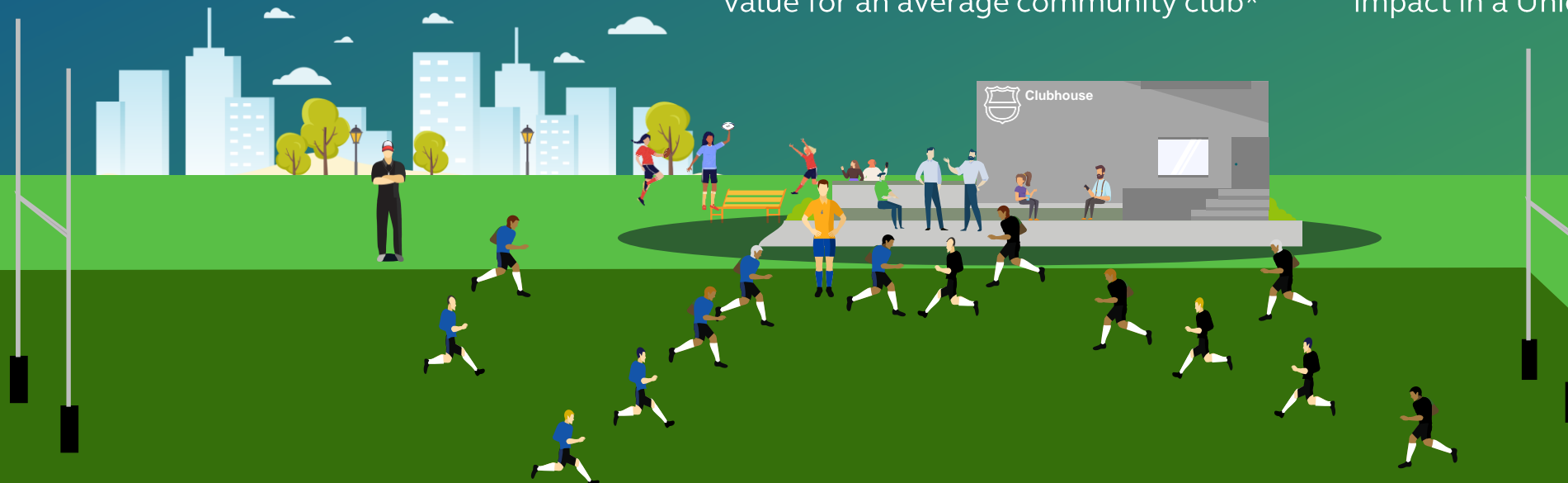
value for an average community club\*

## Nations

At a national level participation reduces healthcare costs, increases GDP and creates jobs within the sector

**US\$210m**

impact in a Union of 150k participants



*\*Assumptions made via World Rugby consultation*



When combined, this equates to

# US\$8.4BN IN HEALTH, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VALUE

Global rugby participation is contributing

## US\$8.4bn

in value to society

**Health**  
US\$1.5bn



173k

&



29k

Reduction in cases of physical health disorders, saving health services ~ US\$970m



131k

Reduction in the number of GP visits

**Social**  
US\$2.4bn



1.1bn+

Hours of positive interaction leading to greater social cohesion



US\$1.9bn+

Wellbeing valuation



~US\$530m

In GDP growth due to improved educational performance

**Economic**  
US\$4.5bn



1.1bn+

Volunteers with a value of US\$660m



US\$1.9bn+

Global rugby workforce value



~US\$530m

In participant consumption

# RUGBY PARTICIPATION POSITIVELY IMPACTS THE HEALTH OF INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

by reducing the risk of different disease groups

Being physically active through **rugby** reduces an individual's risk of developing **physical and mental health disorders**

In adults, this activity reduces an individual's risk of diseases such as **stroke, type 2 diabetes, breast cancer and depression**

Children and young people see significant improvements in **mental wellbeing** as well as increasing the likelihood of **healthy behaviours** continuing well into adulthood



**30%**

less likely to be obese as a child



**2x**

more likely for child participants to have healthy habits in adulthood



**15%**

Reduce risk of coronary heart disease in adults



**27%**

Risk of type 2 diabetes reduction in adults



Adult participants are

**33%**

less likely to suffer from a mental illness\*



**6%**

increase in happiness

\*Sources: 1) Hamer, M., Biddle, S., & Stamatakis, E. Weekend warrior physical activity pattern and common mental disorder: a population wide study of 108,011 British adults (2017) and 2) Goodwin, R. D., Association between physical activity and mental disorders among adults in the United States (2003)

This addresses the most

# PRESSING HEALTH ISSUES FACED BY WOMEN WITHIN SOCIETY

**3k** cases of  
**osteoporosis** prevented

**7k** cases of  
**type 2 diabetes** prevented

**4k** cases of  
**depression** prevented

**6k** cases of  
**anxiety** prevented

**810** cases of  
**breast cancer** prevented

*‘Rugby makes you both mentally and physically tougher, and allows you to push more, to do more in your life’*

Research paper in women’s collegiate rugby in the USA<sup>3</sup>

Health disparities exist between genders, with women spending a greater proportion of their lives in ill health

**21%** of women over 50 have osteoporosis v 6.3% of men<sup>1</sup>

Nearly **700k** women died of breast cancer in 2020<sup>2</sup>

There are **1.84m** females currently playing rugby globally, with plans in place to ensure the health benefits of rugby are being maximised.

As part of the dedicated focus on women's welfare within the six-point *Accelerating the global development of women In rugby 2021-25* plan, we will support a **dedicated research stream** to focus specifically on areas such as **women’s health and mental wellbeing**.

Source: 1) International Osteoporosis Foundation, 2) World Health Organisation, 3) Abrams, H. An exploration of black women’s perceived mattering on a collegiate women’s rugby team

# IN MEN, PARTICIPATION IMPROVES HEALTH CONDITIONS

for which they are disproportionately affected

Some **disease groups disproportionately affect men**, who have a higher rate of prevalence vs. women

**3x** more men die from suicide than women<sup>1</sup>

**2x** more likely to develop type 2 diabetes<sup>2</sup>

**56%** of all cancer deaths occur in males<sup>3</sup>

Participation in rugby helps to **reduce the impact** of these health issues

**155k** positive social interaction hours generated

**28k** cases of type 2 diabetes prevented

*'They helped me when I was really low and in a very bad place'*

*Anonymous In JOCA*

**4k** cases of coronary heart disease prevented

**1k** cases of colon cancer prevented

**4k** strokes prevented



## Welwyn Rugby Club's 'Just One Click Away' (JOCA) initiative

A local rugby club in England established an initiative aimed at de-stigmatising mental health and to provide support, guidance, counselling and a friendly ear in a time of need to its community

**11** clubs which JOCA has expanded to

**120** people supported by JOCA as of 2020

Able to provide a counsellor for free

within just **24** hours

Sources:

- 1) In the United Kingdom, Mental Health Foundation
- 2) Nordström. A. et al (2016)
- 3) GLOBOCAN (2018)



# Childhood participants receive POSITIVE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS

## Mental health

Global cases of mental wellbeing are on the rise, with one in seven children now experiencing a mental disorder.<sup>1</sup>

Being active through rugby can address these mental wellbeing issues by increasing happiness, enhancing self-esteem and reducing stress levels.

**US\$56m** In reduced healthcare costs per annum

Rugby is currently contributing to the reduction of

**54k** cases of depression and anxiety in children

## Physical health

Over 340 million children aged between five-19 were overweight or obese in 2016. This has been caused by an increased intake of energy-dense food and a rise in inactivity.<sup>1</sup>

Being physically active has shown to decrease the odds of becoming obese by 39% for boys and 20% in girls.<sup>2</sup>

Global physical activity through rugby participation is therefore contributing to the reduction of **147k** cases of childhood obesity:

### Childhood

**US\$8.2m** **88%**

Direct childhood savings of obese children become obese adults



### Projected adulthood

**US\$86.6m + US\$388m**

Direct healthcare savings Indirect societal savings



*“Since she joined the programme, she has been saying the word ‘happy’ to me every time she comes home from a session”*

*Player’s mother in ChildFund Pass it Back initiative, in partnership with World Rugby and Asia Rugby*



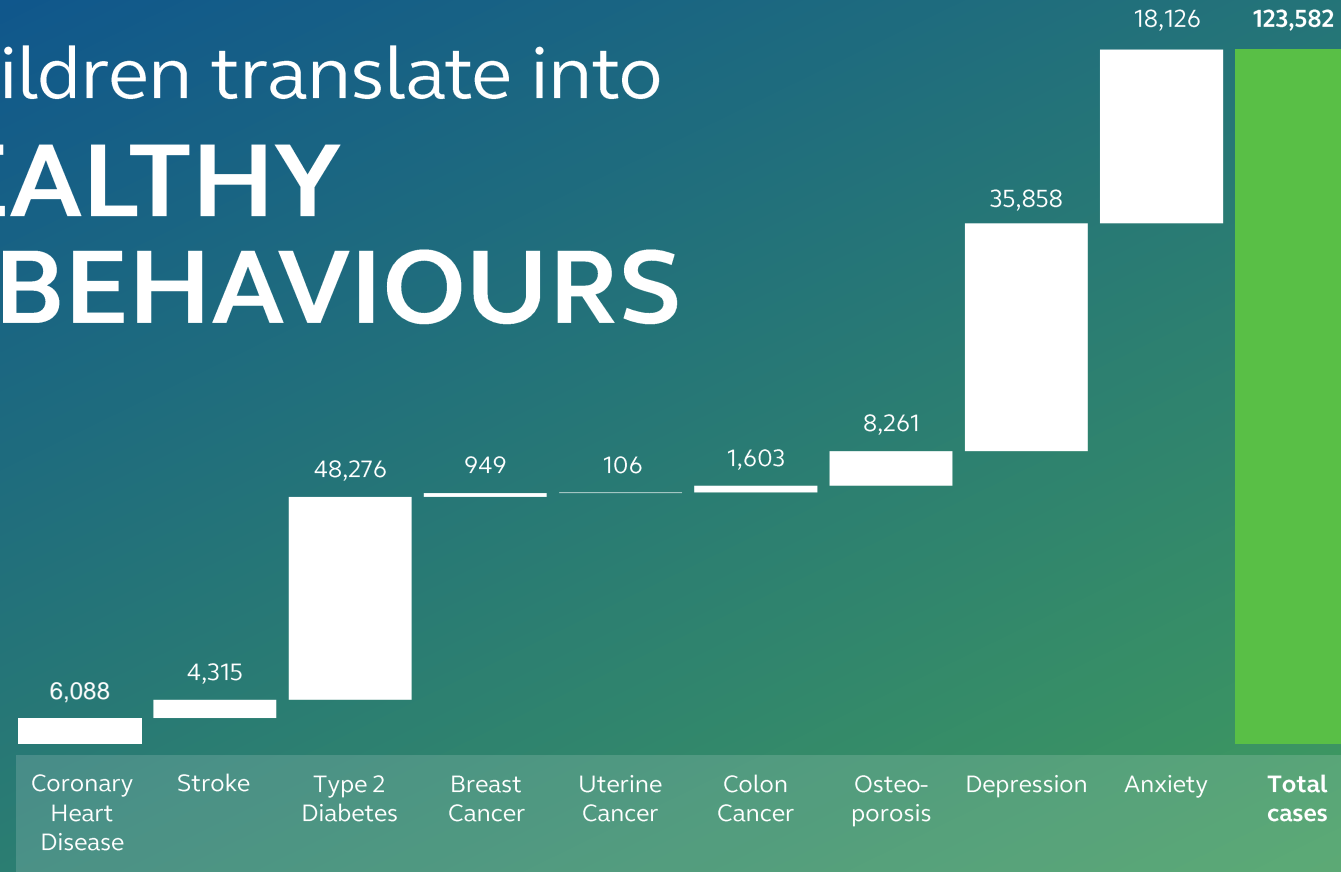
# These benefits in children translate into LIFELONG HEALTHY HABITS AND BEHAVIOURS

## Childhood ► Adulthood

Children who participate in team sport are significantly more likely to be active throughout their lives.<sup>1</sup>

The burden on healthcare systems will therefore be reduced once current youth players rugby reach adulthood.

Source: 1) The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health journal (2019), published in the World Health Organization



**US\$230m**

**Direct**- healthcare savings through reduced treatment, diseases and social care costs

**US\$711m**

**Indirect**- societal impact from improved productivity in the workplace

# Overall, for adults and children, this equates to US\$1.5bn in annual global **HEALTHCARE SAVINGS FROM RUGBY PARTICIPATION**

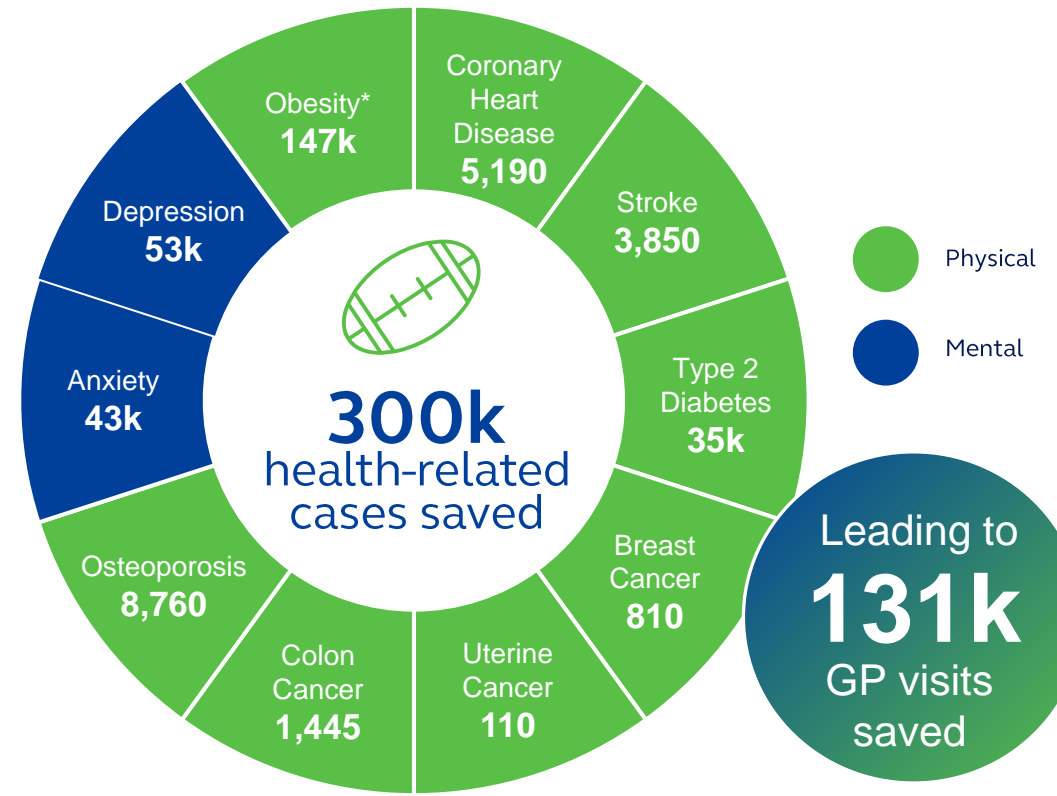
Noncommunicable diseases cost a significant amount to national health systems and cause **41 million deaths** globally.<sup>1</sup>

Being physically active through rugby reduces the prevalence of chronic disease, **resulting in economic savings globally through:**

**US\$457m** **Direct** - healthcare savings through reduced treatment, diseases and social care costs.

**US\$1.03bn** **Indirect** - societal impact from improved productivity in the workplace.

Source 1: 'Noncommunicable diseases', World Health Organization



\*Obesity not measured in adults

# Our game's strong intrinsic values support **PLAYERS' SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Grassroots rugby participants learn to embody the core values of our game.

These values are integral to the development of unique character and distinctive ethos both on and off the field.



*'From feeling miserable and helpless, Uong has now become a confident leader and respected woman'*

Coach Dung in ChildFund Rugby Pass it Back (Vietnam)

These values are integral to the development of unique character and distinctive ethos both on and off the field.



Physically active children report **13% higher leadership scores** compared to those who are inactive.



Active children report **14% higher confidence scores** compared to those who are not active.

This benefit increases to **16% in girls**

ChildFund Rugby's Pass It Back initiative, in partnership with World Rugby and Asia Rugby, delivers a life skills and rugby curriculum for youths in disadvantaged communities.

**18.4k** participants between 2015-19

**2x** likelihood of improved social and emotional competencies<sup>3</sup>

**63%** of Vietnam participants saw increased survey scores<sup>2</sup> on their abilities and attitudes towards setting goals and overcoming obstacles



Source: 1) Sport Impacts Children, UK 2) Participants completed the survey at the beginning and end of the programme 3) for a programme participant vs. non-participant in Vietnam



# INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS ACCUMULATE TO IMPACT SOCIETY

through improved educational attainment,  
positive behaviours and reduced crime



## Improved educational attainment

Young graduates who take part in sport earn on average **US\$9,581\*** more and are **2.5% less likely to be unemployed** v those who do not play sport.<sup>1</sup>



## Positive behaviours

Number of boys **practicing positive behaviours and challenging harmful ones** increased by **26%** after completing a Get Into Rugby programme in Fiji.



## Reduced crime

Children who participate in team sport have a **lower likelihood of committing a crime.**



The Pakistan Rugby Union provides players in South Punjab with **rugby scholarships** to top government universities.

Providing university admissions

**60** players annually



Supporting future job opportunities

**20+** full-time jobs



Helping alleviate poverty for families

**200+** families



# RUGBY CREATES INCLUSIVE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES, where everyone has a place

## Grassroots clubs increase social cohesion and create positive environments



An average community club\* provides **44k** hrs of positive social interaction



Being on a rugby team contributes to a sense of 'mattering', helps people forge strong bonds and friendships, and provides an environment of trust and support<sup>1</sup>



Hours spent in a team environment on and off the pitch contribute to greater social cohesion within communities<sup>2</sup>

'A sense of **mattering** within a **close-knit, welcoming** and **inclusive** community'

Ranked as the **biggest advantage** of playing rugby in a recent USA study into women's collegiate rugby<sup>3</sup>

## Rugby helps to tackle societal issues of inclusivity



Due to the nature of the sport, everyone has a role to play and each team member feels a sense of importance... The variety of positions means rugby is truly a game for all, and it has a particularly strong impact on promoting body positivity<sup>4</sup>



*'Rugby has transformed her confidence. She's proof that size doesn't matter in rugby because despite being one of the smallest girls on the team she's unstoppable on the field. Her dream is to make the Olympics and inspire other girls that you can do anything.'*<sup>5</sup>

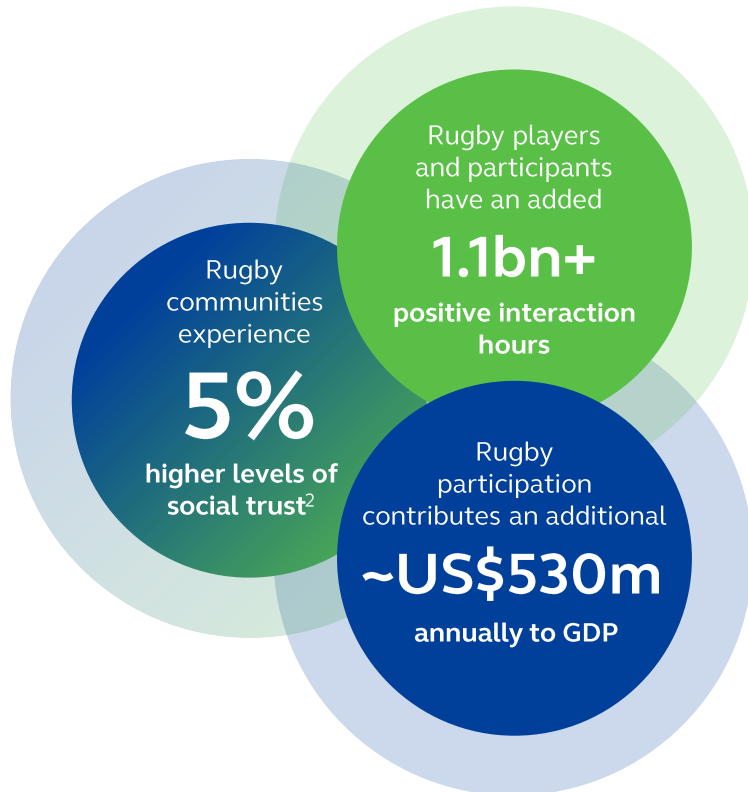
Lakeisha, 16 year old player in Australia

Source: 1,2,3&4) With you: an exploration of black women's perceived mattering on a collegiate women's rugby team, Abrams. H.; 5) Rugby Australia, #Partofmore  
\*Assumptions made via World Rugby consultation

# RUGBY PARTICIPATION DELIVERS A POWERFUL SOCIAL IMPACT

across our Member Unions

**Social trust**  
Rugby contributes to greater trust in society and increases social cohesion<sup>1</sup>



## Positive interaction hours

Players and participants feel more socially connected, contributing to a reduction in loneliness

## Contribution to GDP

Improved educational attainment and soft skills from playing rugby contribute to GDP through greater employment prospects

Source: 1) Bartolomeo, G.D. and Papa, S. (2017), 2) Sport Impacts Children, UK



Rugby has an additional

**+US\$1.9bn**

Wellbeing valuation\*

This demonstrates the value of participation due to improvements in individuals' wellbeing.

This equates to

**US\$912**

per individual

\* This approach is used by the UK government as a measure of social impact. However, as this is a subjective measure rather than a direct contribution to a nation's economy this figure has not been included in the overall total value



# RUGBY'S PARTICIPANTS, VOLUNTEERS AND PAID STAFF yield a significant benefit to society



## Participant consumption

Direct expenditure to play rugby – membership fees, kit, transport, social spend

**US\$162**

Average participant spend per year

## Volunteering

Salary equivalent value of hours worked by volunteers in rugby to support participation

**149**

Average hours of time given per volunteer annually

**US\$5**

Average hourly value globally

## Workforce contribution

Economic value generated through the workforce required to support participation

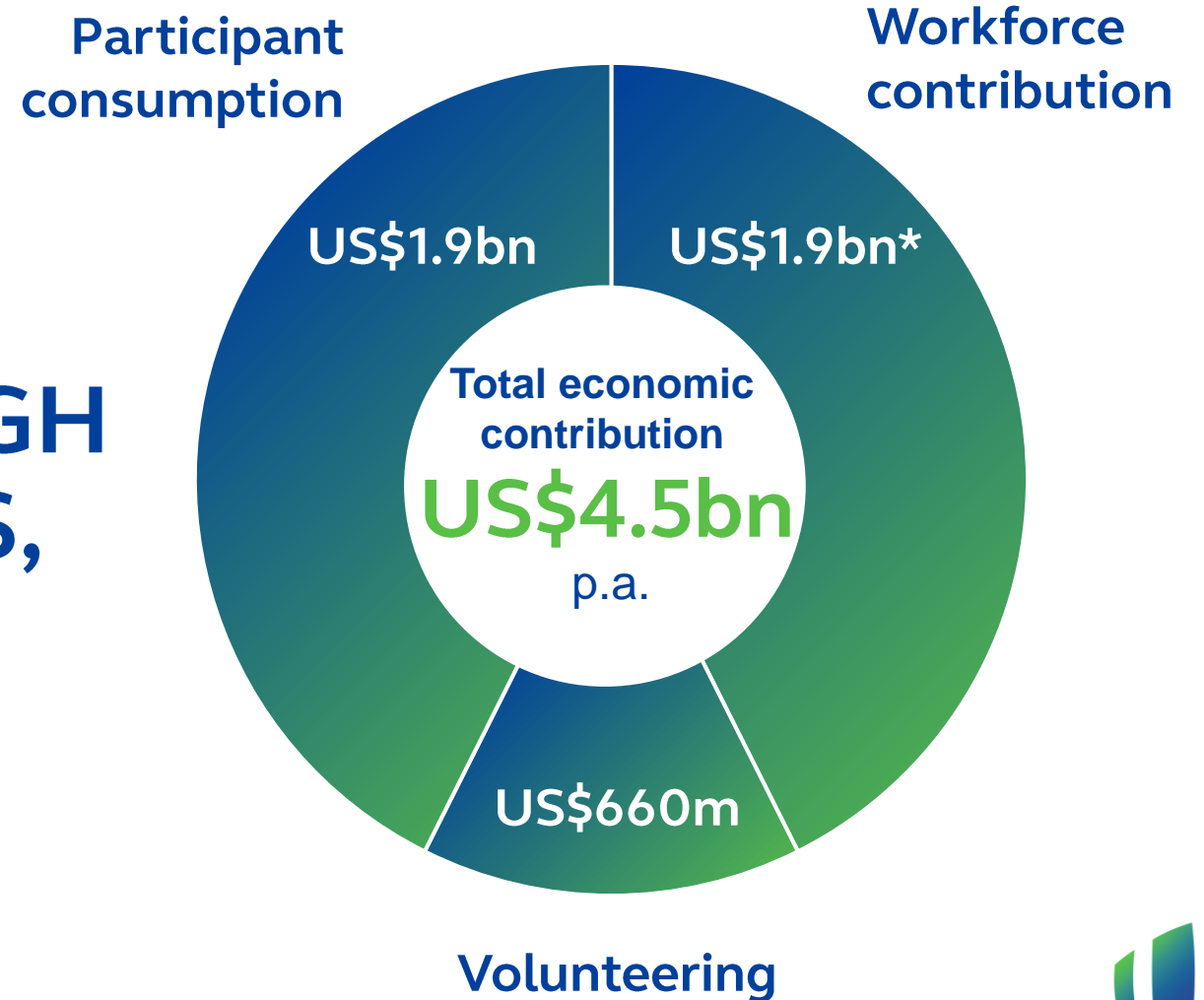
**81**

Average hours of time given per match official annually

**US\$602m**

Economic value generated by paid adult staff in Rugby

At a global level,  
**NEARLY US\$4.5BN IS CONTRIBUTED THROUGH RUGBY'S PARTICIPANTS, VOLUNTEERS AND WORKFORCE**



*\*Formal and informal rugby workforce*



# MAXIMISING IMPACT

# WORLD RUGBY IS COMMITTED TO INVESTING

in three areas to increase participation



## Improving retention

Recover the ground lost by Covid-19 by improving retention of players and increasing participation



## Targeting key markets

Participation is still highly skewed, so target markets have been identified based on participation potential, union capability and capacity and commercial sustainability



## Increasing women's participation

While female participation and presence has greatly improved there is still plenty of opportunity to activate women and girls' rugby further

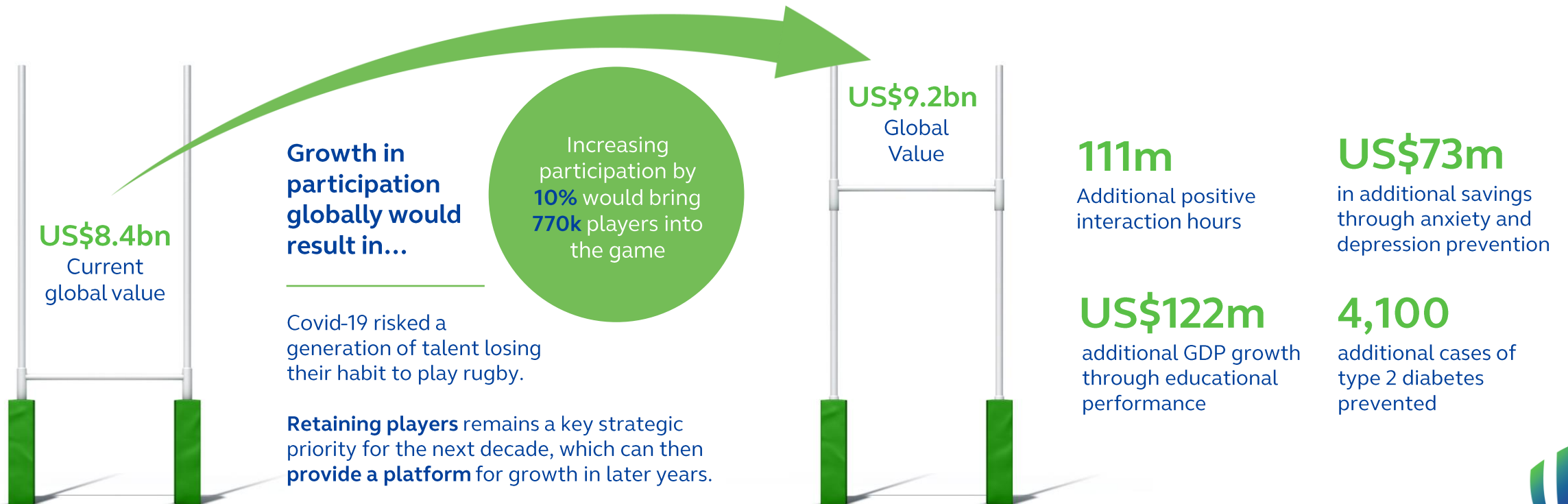


These three areas form a **critical aspect** in achieving our ambition of ensuring rugby is **relevant and accessible**

Achieving these objectives would ensure more **individuals reap the benefits of playing rugby**, culminating in a **greater social value** for the sport

# MORE PLAYERS INVOLVED AND RETAINED IN RUGBY

has the potential to generate an additional US\$830m in value globally

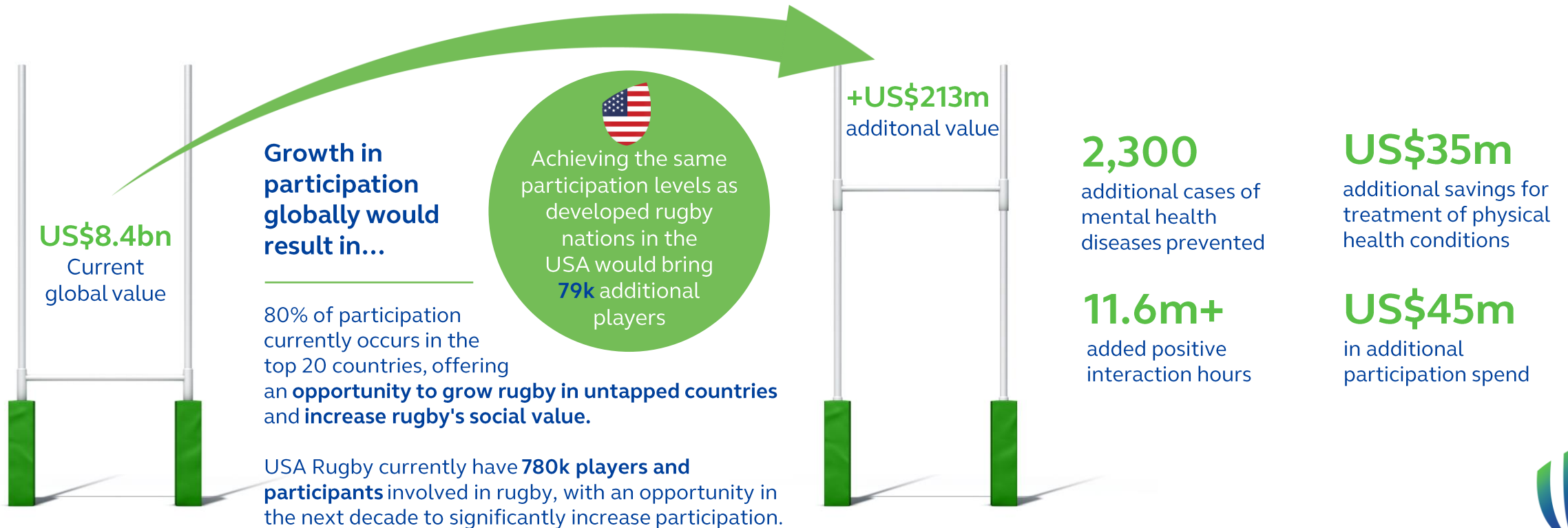






# BROADENING THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE GAME

into growth markets could significantly drive rugby's social value



# CLOSING THE GENDER GAP

could deliver an additional  
US\$2.8bn in value globally



# THIS TARGETED INVESTMENT WILL DELIVER SIGNIFICANT RETURNS



## Targeting key markets

Increasing participation in strategic growth markets, such as the USA, to that of developed rugby nations

**+US\$213m**



## Improving retention

Increasing participation by 10% would bring 770k players into the game

**+US\$830m**



## Increasing female participation

Closing the gender gap would increase the number of players by 2.3m

**+US\$2.8bn**

*Note: Not to scale*





*“RUGBY IS MORE THAN A SPORT, IT IS A FAMILY AND A MOVEMENT WITH STRONG CORE VALUES, DELIVERING DIVERSE AND IMPACTFUL BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES, AND COUNTRIES. BY DEEPENING ENGAGEMENT WITH OUR FAMILY AND PARTNERS, LISTENING AND ACTING, WORLD RUGBY AIMS TO INCREASE THE SPORT’S RELEVANCE, APPEAL AND ACCESSIBILITY, ACHIEVING OUR TARGET OF MAKING RUGBY A TRULY GLOBAL SPORT FOR ALL.”*

*Alan Gilpin, Chief Executive, World Rugby*



# METHODOLOGY AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

## World Rugby Social Value Modelling

World Rugby is the world governing body for the sport of rugby union, with a vision of creating a global sport for all, true to its values. It aims to promote and develop every aspect of the game, from grassroots to professional.

This work was commissioned to provide robust evidence of how rugby can act as a vehicle through which societal challenges can be acknowledged, addressed and improved. World Rugby hopes this report is useful to rugby unions, researchers, academics, government officials and any members of the public who may be interested in the benefits of rugby on a global scale. World Rugby is of the belief that the positive social impacts of rugby can be used to make the case for increased investment in the game.

## Technical information

The socio-economic model was developed by Portas Consulting to quantify the economic, health and social benefits associated with rugby participation in children and adults. The socioeconomic model and underlying analysis is based on an extensive literature review. In line with previous academic and government studies, all monetary values are based on primary analysis or academic research that control for socio-demographic factors.

For questions and additional information on methodology and assumptions, please see information at the following link: [FAQs](#)

