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Soccer stars encourage children at UN-organized event in Texas



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Two teammates of FC Barcelona, the Spanish soccer club that supports the efforts of the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) to improve the lives of children in Africa, made themselves available to young fans in the United States city of Dallas, telling them that with passion and love of the game, they too can become star players.

Striker David Villa and midfielder Thiago Alcántara, who were accompanied by Ramon Pont, the FC Barcelona Vice President, participated in the UNICEF-hosted [event](#) in Dallas on Friday, talking candidly to the more than 30 youngsters who turned up to seek advice on how to improve their skills.

Both players encouraged the children by telling them that “as long as you are happy and passionate about what you are doing, you will always develop your skills to be the best you can be.” Through the sport, the two FC Barcelona players had learned values such as respect for others and hard work to achieve their goals, they said.

Sport is incorporated in UNICEF-supported programmes for specific development objectives such as improving the health of children, increasing their chances of survival, and ensuring that every child has access to basic education, HIV-AIDS prevention and protection from exploitation and abuse. The agency also believes that sport teaches important life lessons about respect, leadership and cooperation, and promotes equality for all.

“UNICEF and FC Barcelona are here... to continue their successful collaboration on behalf of the world’s children,” said Mr. Pont. “For the last five years FC Barcelona has been supporting UNICEF’s efforts to save and improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of children.

“In the next phase of the partnership we will focus on supporting a global movement for quality education and sport that will deliver tangible results for children.”

Lawrence Picard, UNICEF’s Deputy Director for Operations, said: “UNICEF is extremely proud of its partnership with FC Barcelona, which has helped improve the lives of more than 400,000 children, many in sub-Saharan Africa.

“We believe this partnership is a leading example of sport contributing to social change for children. We are looking forward to taking this ground-breaking partnership to the next stage in the new season by utilizing the social assets of the club to engage many more people in support of a global movement for education and sport,” said Mr. Picard.

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