

Chapter 3

Using Sport to Advance Development Objectives

Sport is a broad phenomenon that encompasses diverse types of activity, organisation and participation. This broad range makes sport versatile and adaptable, and equally relevant to the development challenges in low-income nations as in affluent ones. The UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace defines sport as ‘...all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. These include play; recreation; organized, casual or competitive sport; and indigenous sports or games.’

There are many contexts in which sport can provide valuable support to help advance Commonwealth development goals, and where the omission of sport would be a missed opportunity.

The principles that should underpin the use of sport to advance development and peace are:

Principles to strengthen sport-based approaches and connect them to established policy domains within Commonwealth development work

1. Sport for Development and Peace must be explicitly linked to the Commonwealth’s shared values and commitment to promoting development, democracy and diversity.
2. Sport for Development and Peace should leverage sustainable, quality and on-going sport activity and be intentionally planned to realise specific developmental goals.
3. Sport for Development and Peace is most effective when integrated with the development sector in support of regional, national and local development priorities.

Principles to maximise positive outcomes and minimise negative consequences of sport-based contributions to development

4. Fully accessible programmes ensuring leaders and participants are safeguarded at all times.
5. Decentralised programmes that involve intended beneficiaries and their communities in the planning process and take local needs and assets into consideration.
6. Programmes designed on the basis of evidence-based models, and conducted with systematic measurement of progress and appropriate monitoring and evaluation.

Chapters 4–9 give specific guidelines on utilising sport in the development focus areas of: youth, health, education, gender, equality and inclusion, and peace-building and conflict situations.

Sport is a broad phenomenon that encompasses diverse forms of activity, organisation and participation

3.1 Development and peace, the Commonwealth context

The Commonwealth promotes protection and inclusion for all citizens and acknowledges human development as a fundamental right that is central to social, economic, cultural, and technological development and to peace³. It works to raise the potential of its people, particularly women, young people, poor people or those on the margins of their societies, and aims to create an environment in which all Commonwealth citizens can lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests.

In the area of human development, where the Commonwealth aims contribute to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to longer-term development objectives, key priorities are:

- Progress towards specific education and health related targets, including the MDGs.
- Integration of gender equality and human rights in global frameworks and initiatives.
- Effective socio-economic inclusion of youth, women and other marginalised groups.
- Access and integration of young people, women and civil society to governance and national development processes as significant contributors to development, peace and security.

In its work to prevent and resolve conflict, the Commonwealth works as a collective to improve the political and social atmosphere when conflict or tensions emerge, and promotes the upholding of democracy and good governance by public and civil society organisations.

There are many contexts in which sport can provide valuable support for this work, and where the omission of sport would be a missed opportunity. The principles that should underpin the use of sport in these roles are set out below followed by recommendations on how sport-based activity can be utilised within specific areas of the relevant policy domains.

3.2 Defining sport

Sport is a broad phenomenon that encompasses diverse types of activity, organisation and participation. It takes many forms and is not limited to the more obvious well-known mainstream sports, but includes informal physical activity and diverse forms of local,

traditional and alternative activities. The UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (2003: v) recognises the breadth of activities that sport covers in its definition of sport as ‘...all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. These include play; recreation; organized, casual or competitive sport; and indigenous sports or games.’

This broad range makes sport versatile and adaptable, and equally relevant to the development challenges in low-income nations as in affluent ones. Sport is therefore most valuable in development contexts when it reflects local circumstances, cultures and traditions. Participation in sport occurs at many levels and includes informal play and movement in open spaces, more organised involvement in sport that is provided in communities and in schools, and taking part competitively in local leagues and tournaments. At higher levels of performance, sport is a popular spectacle watched live or in the media and its mass appeal can be used to harness support for development efforts. In some contexts sport is most valuable for its physical and mental health benefits and can serve development interests best as a component of the wider concept of ‘physical activity’.

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3.3 Principles for using sport to advance development and peace

Over the last decade the number of initiatives utilising sport to advance development has grown significantly. Sport is now being used extensively in support of diverse development goals and many SDP-related organisations and projects have been in operation for several years (Kidd 2008). Lessons have been learned from these programmes about the approach on which effective, sustainable sport-based contributions to development should be based. This includes adopting appropriately broad, flexible definitions of sport; connecting sport programmes to established development policy; and ensuring that sport-based programmes and initiatives are planned, managed, delivered and monitored in ways that maximise positive outcomes.

3.3.1 Principles to strengthen sport-based approaches and connect them to established policy domains within Commonwealth development work

Principle 1

Sport for Development and Peace must be explicitly linked to the Commonwealth's shared values and commitment to promoting development, democracy and diversity.

Sport embodies the Commonwealth's shared values and is most effective when explicitly linked to them. Contemporary sport can contribute to the Commonwealth's wider development and peace agenda through its ability to engage diverse groups, foster social interaction within and between them, and provide a context for promoting democratic values and human rights.

Principle 2

Sport for Development and Peace should leverage sustainable, quality and on-going sport activity and be intentionally planned to realise specific developmental goals.

Sport is well-established in the Commonwealth and an important shared tradition amongst member countries. It is important that the use of sport for development and peace make use of the existing level of interest in Commonwealth sport and the structures, activities and expertise that support it, and further develops them. Sustainable contributions to development require a strong sport sector that can provide the support partners other policy domains need to use sport to support specific development goals.

Principle 3

Sport for Development and Peace is most effective when integrated with the development sector in support of regional, national and local development priorities.

In the broader development context sport is one of a range of tools that should be recognised as contributing to wider development agendas and strategies. The value of the additional qualities and approaches that sport can offer will be maximised if they complement and become integrated with well-established policy domains. Sport-based activity should not be developed separately from the Commonwealth's established development agenda, but closely integrated within strategies to which it can

make a strong contribution and used selectively in support of specific development objectives.

3.3.2 Principles to maximise positive outcomes and minimise negative consequences

Principle 4

Fully accessible programmes ensuring leaders and participants are safeguarded at all times.

The characteristics of sport readily support development outcomes; however, it is important to recognise that sport, as with other sites of socio-cultural interaction, can be a platform for both positive and negative experiences. If sport is not well managed it may exclude participants rather than include them, and expose them to abuse. Recognising and proactively combating these risks must be a key tenet for sport if development outcomes are to be maximised.

Safeguarding children and youth is especially important. Sport activities often take place away from young people's homes or communities, placing vulnerable young people in the care of coaches and officials. Implementing robust measures for violence prevention and to protect and safeguard the child is essential (Innocenti Research Centre 2010).

Principle 5

Decentralised programmes that involve intended beneficiaries and their communities in the planning process and take local needs and assets into consideration.

Successful development programmes are based on the ideology and practise of partnership and participation and these core principles must underpin use of sport for development and peace. Contemporary development is founded on mutuality, rejects notions of unequal 'expert-learner' relationships, and focuses efforts on supporting local agencies and communities.

It is important that these approaches are embedded in sport for development and peace work. Many in sport share this commitment to partnership but there can be challenges in translating this into practice, especially in international development contexts where the global appeal and status of sport can encourage 'top-down'

leadership and can result in a 'one size fits all' approach (Levermore and Beacom 2009). An ethos of partnership is required that recognises the need for specific sport initiatives to be embedded in the socio-cultural context in which they take place, and that takes account of critical differences in circumstances both within and across national settings. Sport has universal appeal because it can be moulded to become what each individual and community needs. Sport can best serve development by offering itself for local adaptation.

Principle 6

Programmes designed on the basis of evidence-based models, and conducted with systematic measurement of progress and appropriate monitoring and evaluation.

It is important for sport programmes to be informed by the wide array of research that has been conducted in this field. Literature published by highly regarded international expert networks including the UN Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (Kidd and Donnelly 2007) should inform sport for development programmes.

Sport programmes also need to be informed by deep understandings of local contexts, community and culture; although technical knowledge of sport is needed, the success of any sport programme rests on it being used appropriately in ways that best serve its intended community and participants. In this context it is important that knowledge and understanding held by practitioners and local actors is also valued and that research-based evidence is not unduly privileged. Local input is especially needed to ensure initiatives are shaped appropriately to local preferences and interests, and acknowledge likely cultural and resource constraints. This is essential to improve the likelihood of longer-term sustainability.

As in all aspects of development work, there is a need to monitor and evaluate the development and impact of SDP programmes. To this end the SDP evidence base contains a large number of research, monitoring and evaluation studies which provide examples of possible methodologies (Kidd and Donnelly 2007). These also demonstrate the challenges encountered in attempting to evaluate complex social outcomes from SDP programmes,

especially in the long term. Here it will be valuable for sport to learn from and align with the approaches used by the wider development sector in managing impact assessments effectively to help ensure that the knowledge generated has local as well as external benefit.