

Chapter 4

Advancing Youth Development through Sport

Children and young people are a strong focus in development work across the Commonwealth; over 60 per cent of the Commonwealth's population is under 30 years of age. The issues faced by youth are complex and cross-cutting, making them a priority population sector within many separate Commonwealth policy areas, including health, education and gender equality. Many of the issues relating to the use of sport to support youth development in the Commonwealth therefore also feature in the discussions of other policy areas below, aligning with Commonwealth Heads of Government's declaration of the vital importance of sports in assisting young people to stay healthy, contribute to society and develop into leaders of their communities (Commonwealth Secretariat 2011). The broad appeal of sport to many young people, and its high media profile, makes it an appropriate tool for a range of work with youth.

4.1 Policy priorities

The Commonwealth describes youth empowerment and development as crucial 'not only in terms of social inclusion policy but also in terms of young people's role as positive change agents and in nation building' (Commonwealth Secretariat 2006). The overarching agenda for youth-focused work in the Commonwealth is to create enabling environments for youth engagement and empowerment. Young people are considered assets and partners in development.

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) 2007–2015, produced by the Commonwealth Secretariat's Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) focuses on a commitment to youth development as a part of broader development efforts. The plan identifies action points under three strategic programme areas: sustainable livelihoods for young people; education and training; and engaging young people in governance and development efforts (CYP 2007).

4.2 How sport can contribute

Sport is an especially valuable tool for working with young people across the Commonwealth because of the particularly strong association between sport and youth. In many Commonwealth countries young people obtain some experience of sport participation, in particular if sport is part of the universal compulsory education system. In other situations, large numbers of young people choose to take part in sport when they have the opportunity to do so in non-formal settings. Not all youth are attracted to sport, but its appeal is sufficiently wide to make sport an obvious tool for working with young people, and it is used by many who do so in local community and education settings. Sport also has a high media profile, with major sporting events such as the Olympics and Commonwealth Games, football, cricket and rugby World Cups, and regional events such as the All-Africa Games and Asian Games drawing large audiences. This popularity makes sport a valuable tool for advocacy and engagement that can be used to support a number of aspects of work for development and peace.

The broad appeal of sport to many young people makes it an appropriate tool for a range of work with youth. Participating in sport at a young age is also important for establishing long-term patterns of physical activity and social engagement that can contribute to health and well-being across the lifespan, so the benefits of working with young people through sport are not confined to youth alone (WHO 2010). There are therefore several reasons for making good use of the ways in which sport can make a measured contribution to issues prioritised in youth development strategies across the Commonwealth.

Table 4.1 sets out how sport can support the Commonwealth's established youth policy priority areas.

The broad appeal of sport to many young people makes it an appropriate tool for a range of work with youth

Table 4.1 Sport and the Commonwealth's youth policy priority areas

<i>How sport can contribute</i>	<i>Considerations for policy formation and development planning</i>
Strengthen social support systems and collaboration between key stakeholders in youth empowerment (Commonwealth PAYE Action Point 2)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport can be harnessed to provide social support networks for young people and links for young people who are not involved with other networks. Sport is attractive to many young people, including some hard-to-reach groups who do not engage with other institutions such as schools and religious institutions (Holroyd et al. 2003). • Sport provides an informal context in which young people can build relationships with adult leaders and teachers; it is recognised that being able to interact with supportive adults is especially valuable for young people who have instability in their lives (Kay and Spaaij 2011). • Through participating in the communities that exist around sports programmes and clubs, sport can also support young people in developing enhanced 'social capital' (Coalter 2010). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise links between sport and youth delivery mechanisms. • Integrate sport-based approaches in youth engagement and development initiatives.
Promote the participation of young people in decision-making (Commonwealth PAYE Action Point 3)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many sport programmes are based on the principle of peer leadership, providing young people with chances to take leadership and organisational roles in their communities. Young people who become peer leaders are given greater opportunities to develop leadership and organisational skills through sport (Coalter 2010). • Sport also gives young people chances to interact with peers, and to learn to work together productively (Martinek unknown). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate 'youth leadership through sport' into youth development models. • Engage youth sport leaders and peer coaches in wider youth leadership networks and forums. • Promote peer leadership programmes within sport.
Promote positive role models and foster young people's self-esteem (Commonwealth PAYE Action Point 5)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport can be used to foster young people's self-esteem by offering opportunities for personal development (Eccles et al. 2003). • Participating in appropriately managed sport programmes can increase young people's skills, confidence and self-knowledge. • Being involved in the communities that develop around sporting activity provides many opportunities for young people to enhance their social skills and networks (Eccles et al. 2003). • Some activities, such as team sports, can be particularly helpful for developing communication and decision-making skills (Kay 2009). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train youth workers and non-specialist teachers to organise safe sport and physical activity. • Facilitate access to school and community sport facilities and equipment for youth and community groups.

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Table 4.1 Sport and the Commonwealth’s youth policy priority areas (cont.)

<i>How sport can contribute</i>	<i>Considerations for policy formation and development planning</i>
Take action for equality between young women and men, and for youth in special circumstances (Commonwealth PAYE Action Point 6)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport can be used to promote empowerment and inclusion as sporting activities offer a different medium through which to engage children and young people, including those with disabilities and girls and women (Jeanes 2010; Hayhurst et al. 2009). • Making opportunities available for young women, young people with a disability and other youth from marginalised groups to participate in well managed sport programmes provides them with safe spaces for interaction and development, and can also introduce them to additional opportunities and support networks (Kay 2009). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote gender sensitive and inclusive programming, including considerations for people with a disability. • Conduct aggregated monitoring to give a clear indication of the participation levels of targeted groups. • Strengthen mechanisms to ensure participants in sport-based approaches, including girls, women and people with a disability, are safeguarded and protected.
Promote peaceful and democratic environments in which human rights flourish (Commonwealth PAYE Action Point 7)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When sport is used as a platform for rights-based education and learning it can make a contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and peaceful and democratic environments. • Some sport projects include educational sessions on human rights in their activities programme. Sport can also be used as a direct information tool to deliver educational content; for example, some programmes examine moral issues from the perspective of the rules governing fair play in sport (Kay 2009). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate partnerships between youth, sport and other relevant sectors promoting human rights. • Link sport delivery agencies and organisations that can support the integration of development messaging into sport activities.
Provide quality education for all (Commonwealth PAYE Action Point 8)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport and physical education can be used to support the provision of ‘education for all’ by helping to engage young people in educational opportunities. • The attractiveness of sport can be used to encourage young people to attend school. In this way the opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity can create pathways to education programmes, and once enrolled, encourage attendance (SDP IWG 2008). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference the use of sport and physical activity as an engagement tool in education policy and strategy. • Maximise the provision of safe spaces for play, and access to sporting opportunities, in schools and education institutions.

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Table 4.1 Sport and the Commonwealth's youth policy priority areas (cont.)

<i>How sport can contribute</i>	<i>Considerations for policy formation and development planning</i>
Provide quality education for all (Commonwealth PAYE Action Point 8) (cont.)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When young people are in school sport can be used as a motivational tool to encourage students to attend their classes and engage in the educational process.⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link sport organisations and education institutions and encouraging partnership work. Include physical education in curriculum and build teachers' capacity to deliver quality physical education experiences.
Youth and the promotion of health, development and values through sports and culture (Commonwealth PAYE Action Point 10)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular physical activity is a key component of a healthy lifestyle. Taking part in sport is a valuable activity for young people in its own right and makes a significant contribution to young people's health (WHO 2010). Sport can be used to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce risk factors when used as a platform for education and messaging. Sport can be used to promote wider development goals; for example, several sport and movement games have been developed to teach young people about HIV AIDS through experiential learning (Janes 2011). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan youth engagement activities around sport and physical activity events. Link sport delivery agencies and organisations that can support the integration of health messaging and education into sport activities.

4.3 Case study examples

The majority of SDP initiatives in the Commonwealth are targeted at young people. There are therefore many well-documented examples of how sport-based approaches for youth can contribute to diverse development goals. The examples below illustrate a range of ways in which sport is being used in the Commonwealth to support key development goals for young people.

Panchayat Yuva Krida Aur Khel Abhiyan (PYKKA) – India

Initiative	The PYKKA programme aims to improve accessibility to sport in the rural areas of India. This is achieved through building the capacity of a cadre of <i>Kridashree</i> , or sports volunteers, in local communities and providing infrastructure, coaching and competition. An important component of the initiative is 'to increase the participation of women and people with a disability to help to dispel myths and prejudices about these groups through sport' (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports 2010). Training includes rights-based approaches and coaches are often involved in community mobilisation around local issues. Much of the activity takes place in schools and a number of the coaches are also teachers, which helps to strengthen links to local schools and create child friendly schools.
Policy context	The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009) Cabinet emphasises the centrality of quality physical education and sport. PYKKA is also an approved national 'sport for all' programme.
Further information	www.pykka.gov.in

National School Sport Strategy – Bangladesh

Initiative	The National School Sports Strategy in Bangladesh is now to include Youth Sport Leadership practice. The Directorate of Sports included Youth Sport Leadership training in the annual training programme published in December 2011. The initiative aims to develop leadership, communication, and administrative skills through giving young people the opportunity to be involved in sport festival delivery. Young leaders involved in sport in other contexts reported several personal benefits from the experience as well as increased participation in sport by their peers.
Policy context	Bangladesh National School Sport Strategy (2011)

The Namibia Volunteer Involvement Program (NAM-VIP) – Namibia

Initiative	<i>NAM-VIP</i> uses sports volunteering to develop the leadership skills of young people across Namibia. Led by sub-Saharan Africa NGO Sports Coaches Outreach (SCORE) Namibia and delivered in partnership with the Namibian Government, the programme trains young volunteers to organise and deliver community sport activity. This approach has been shown to develop the leadership, communication and management skills of the volunteers.
Policy context	National Youth Service Act, Act No.6 of 2006
Further information	www.commonwealthgames.ca/ids/what-we-do/ids-africa/namibia-volunteer-involvement-program-nam-vip.html

Magic Bus – India

Initiative	The Magic Bus programme works with disadvantaged children and youth in India. Many participants in the programme live in slums with very little play space; dwellings are small and packed close together and accessed by very narrow pathways. They often work for several hours each day. Since PE is not established in schools and there is little space to develop play skills in the slums, the programme aims to develop basic physical literacy skills and to provide a safe haven outside extremely poor and often oppressive communities to enable children simply to explore aspects of childhood and have fun and enjoyment (Coalter 2005). It also aims to develop communication, interaction and social leadership skills through activities conducted alongside participation in sport and other physical activities.
Policy context	The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009)
Further information	www.magicbus.org

Youth Sport Program – Papua New Guinea

Initiative	The Youth Sports Program provides training opportunities for sports leaders, community leaders, sports administrators, teachers and others in developing their leadership skills and in administration of sports and social clubs in grass roots communities. The programme is delivered in partnership with the Provincial and District Administrations and is co-ordinated with Women in Sport initiatives.
Policy context	Papua New Guinea National Sports Policy 2004
Further information	www.sportingpulse.com/assoc_page.cgi?c=2-7798-0-0-0&SID=207680