

## Chapter 6

# Advancing Goals for Education through Sport

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Education underpins social and economic development and is a strong priority in development policies. The goal of Commonwealth member countries is for every Commonwealth citizen to have access to high quality universal education regardless of gender, age, socio-economic status or ethnicity. Commonwealth governments work to provide education of good quality for all by improving enrolment in primary and secondary education, combating gender disparity and other forms of exclusion, and improving the scale and quality of educational provision. Sport can have a positive effect on children within education environments and can be used to deliver a range of educational content, including life skills and health education.

### 6.1 Policy priorities

The Commonwealth priorities for education are framed by two sets of international goals, the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of the global movement, Education for All (EFA). Two MDGs are specific to education: universal primary education (MDG 2) and gender equality in education, employment and representation (MDG 3). Education also makes fundamental contributions to other MDGs, especially those concerning poverty reduction and economic empowerment (MDG 1), and health education (MDGs 4, 5 and 6).

The Education for All movement was established in 1990. UNESCO takes the lead in co-ordinating international efforts by governments, development agencies, civil society, non-government organisations and other partners. Education for All aims to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults through six action areas: Universal Primary Education; elimination of gender disparities; improvement in the quality of education; use of distance learning to overcome barriers; support to education in difficult circumstances; and mitigation of the impact of HIV and AIDS on education. Since 2000, the work of EFA has included contributing to the educational MDGs (UNESCO n.d.).

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The Commonwealth policy priorities for education (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010a), which align with the MDGs and with the EFA action areas, are to: achieve and sustain Universal Primary Education and the related MDGs; improve quality and equitable access and inclusion of education and education for all; promote and advance the improvement of gender equality in education; and promote respect and understanding through education.

## **6.2 How sport can contribute**

Sport offers several potential contributions to education priorities in the Commonwealth. It offers a mechanism through which to engage children and young people in education settings, including those with disabilities, girls and women (Jeans 2010). Sport can be particularly useful for reaching groups that are harder to access, for example, boys and young men who have become disengaged from schooling. Equally, the unique context provided by sport-based programmes can also assist in strengthening relationships between peers, adults and youth, and teachers and students (Crabbe 2009). In education settings these benefits can contribute to creating a more child and student friendly environment.

Research suggests appropriate and well delivered physical education and sport has a positive effect on children within education environments (Bailey and Dismore 2004). Notions that participating in sport and physical education adversely affects education attainment are misconceived (Stead and Neville 2010) and, under the right circumstances, participation may lead to improved academic performance (Bailey et al. 2009; Trudeau and Shephard 2008).

As well as being a tool for engaging young people in education, and in the right circumstances positively effecting education environments, sport can be used to deliver educational content. Sport activities can be adapted to deliver educational messages through experiential learning, and sport programmes can also be scheduled to include time for delivering a range of educational content, including life skills and health education (SDP IWG 2007). Educators also identify the value of sport in reinforcing the social development of young people within their educational contexts, for example by encouraging their communication skills and engagement in the classroom.

Table 6.1 sets out how sport can be used to support the Commonwealth’s four key education policy priorities, as outlined above.

**Table 6.1 Sport and the Commonwealth’s four key education policy priorities**

<i>How sport can contribute</i>	<i>Considerations for policy formation and development planning</i>
<b>Improve education quality and inclusion (MDG 1 and EFA action area)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research suggests appropriate and well delivered physical education and sport has a positive effect on children within education environments (Bailey and Dismore 2004) and, that under the right circumstances, participation supports improved academic performance (Stead and Neville 2010; Bailey et al. 2009).</li> <li>• Incorporating sport and play within the education offering can assist in creating ‘student centred environments’ as engaging with adults through sport helps build positive relationships with teachers and other authority figures (Andrews and Andrews 2003).</li> <li>• Sport can be more attractive than mainstream education subjects to groups that are difficult to engage and this popularity can be used to increase school attendance (Kay et al. 2008; Holroyd et al. 2003).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide sport, physical education and structured play opportunities in the school environment and support these opportunities with relevant resource provision.</li> <li>• Embed physical education in the curriculum and support teachers with appropriate training and resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Achieve and sustain Universal Primary Education (MDG 1 and EFA action area)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport programmes that take place on school sites can encourage young people to engage with schools as the popularity of sports can be used as a bridge to populations who are hard to reach through standard enrolment processes (SDP IWG 2008).</li> <li>• Participation in sport also can be used as a motivational tool for children to attend school and complement classroom education supporting progress (SDP IWG 2008).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training and capacity building for both specialist and non-specialist sport and physical education teachers.</li> <li>• Enable community sport organisations to access sports facilities in schools and encourage partnership work with school authorities.</li> </ul>
<b>Eliminate gender disparity in all levels of education (MDG 3 and EFA action area)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport programmes to empower girls and young women can play a role in raising educational aspirations among the target group and their families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote gender sensitive sport programming within educational settings.</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*

**Table 6.1 Sport and the Commonwealth's four key education policy priorities (cont.)**

<i>How sport can contribute</i>	<i>Considerations for policy formation and development planning</i>
<b>Eliminate gender disparity in all levels of education (MDG 3 and EFA action area) (cont.)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participating in sport can increase the confidence of girls and young women (Lindgren et al. 2002) and improve the quality of their school experiences, including their relationships with teachers.</li> <li>Some sport programmes offer educational scholarships for schooling as part of their empowerment efforts (Kay 2012).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct gender aggregated monitoring to clearly indicate female participation levels in sport, sport volunteering and sport peer leadership within educational settings.</li> <li>Strengthen mechanisms to ensure participants in sport and physical activity within schools are safeguarded and protected.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote respect and understanding through education (Commonwealth priority area)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With appropriate partnerships and expertise, sport programmes can be used to deliver education on social issues including human rights and diversity (Hellison 1995).</li> <li>The unique social interaction that is possible (Kidd and Donnelly 2007) when taking part in well managed sport programmes offers opportunities for personal development, improved self-knowledge and enhanced social skills (Goudas et al. 2006).</li> <li>Additionally sport role models can be engaged to reinforce messages of respect and understanding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise sport-based programmes as platforms to deliver education on social issues.</li> </ul>

### 6.3 Case study examples

Sport is internationally recognised as an important component of a holistic education programme. The UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education and Sport of 1978 states 'every human being has a fundamental right of access to physical education and sport' declaring this to be essential for the full personality development. While this right is far from being realised across the Commonwealth many programmes work to achieve it, and although sport is a crucial component of education in itself, there are also many examples of sport contributing to broader educational goals and objectives.

### Go Sisters, EduSport – Zambia

Initiative	In Zambia, the Go Sisters peer leadership sport programme run by the local NGO, EduSport, provides teaching on HIV and AIDS education, human rights, personal development and a range of life skills. Young women are trained to run sport activities in their communities, and deliver HIV/AIDS education. The programme also provides financial support for school attendance through a system of scholarships. In addition, experienced Peer Leaders have the opportunity to undertake placements working within the programme, to develop their professional skills. EduSport receives local support from the Sport Ministry and overseas support from UK Sport and others.
Policy framework	National Gender Policy (2000)
Further information	<a href="http://www.edusport.org.zm">www.edusport.org.zm</a>

### Child Friendly School Initiative – Mozambique

Initiative	<p>Child Friendly Schools is an initiative of the Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNICEF within the International Inspiration programme. The initiative aims to improve the provision and relevance of education in primary schools through the integration of high quality physical education and sport into the child friendly schools model. A national task force developed a child-centred PE manual for lower primary schools that was endorsed by the Special Programme Directorate and the National General Education Directorate to be disseminated across every primary school in Mozambique.</p> <p>Approximately 90,000 girls and 115,000 boys now have regular classes of PE and sports, as reported by District Offices of Education, Youth and Technology based on monitoring visits.</p>
Policy framework	Response to pupil retention challenges by UNICEF in partnership with the Mozambique Ministry of Education.
Further information	<a href="http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/mozambique_56620.html">www.unicef.org/infobycountry/mozambique_56620.html</a>

### Just Play Programme – Oceania

Initiative	<p>The key objectives of the Oceania Football Confederation’s Just Play programme are to support retention in primary education and foster social inclusion of girls and people with a disability. The programme is focused on participants aged 6–12 years old and is situated around the school. It utilises a ‘cascade model’ based on training teachers to deliver an adapted curriculum. Just Play has been launched in nine Pacific countries, where over 1,400 coaches have been trained and more than 70,000 have participated. The programme uses a robust in-country delivery model with regional and national project management support and a developed monitoring system.</p> <p>Two elements of the Just Play curriculum contribute to the programme objectives. First, the design is centred on child-friendly approaches with instructors, trainers and coaches explicitly referred to article 6 of the UN Convention on Child Rights, the ‘right to play’. Second, the programme has a specific gender strategy incorporated into the games children take part in. Each game has rules stipulating boys must pass to girls, and specific scoring systems whereby goals scored by female participants are worth double. The Oceania Football Confederation works in collaboration with AusAID, the Australian Sports Commission and UEFA to deliver the programme.</p>
Policy context	<p>The delivery of Just Play is overarched by a memorandum of understanding between the Oceania Football Confederation and the Ministry of Education in each operational country.</p>
Further information	<p><a href="http://justplayofc.org">http://justplayofc.org</a></p>