

Chapter 9

Advancing Peace and Stability through Sport

Peace and security are core values on which the Commonwealth is based. Commonwealth member countries hold that peace and security, economic growth and development and the rule of law 'are essential to the progress and prosperity of all'.⁹ Conflicts that threaten peace and security may occur between nations or within them, at a macro level or within specified communities, and cause extensive practical and social instability. The lives of vulnerable groups, including young people, women, people with disabilities and older people, are especially likely to be affected. Carefully managed and co-ordinated sports contributions can facilitate dialogue and promote shared experience.

9.1 Policy priorities

Peace and conflict management is by its nature a highly complex area of work. Within the Commonwealth this area of work focuses on efforts to reduce the likelihood of conflicts emerging, by addressing underlying causes of tension and improving communication and dialogue. The Commonwealth also conducts this work in conflict and post-conflict situations, but acknowledges that once conflict occurs, achieving an enduring peaceful resolution is challenging; about half of all countries that emerge from conflict lapse back into violence. Preventing conflict is therefore especially valuable.

The overarching approaches for preventing conflict in the Commonwealth are to strengthen democratic governance, promote productive dialogue between conflicting groups and provide a framework for peace and stability. These approaches involve:

- Bringing together representatives from diverse backgrounds including governments, civil society and young people in order to promote dialogue on a range of issues and concerns (inter-generational, inter-cultural, peace-building) to build consensus on practical ways forward.

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- Creating spaces, providing platforms and suggesting frameworks for dialogue, debate and review as well as the sharing of good practices.
- Undertaking and disseminating meaningful and participatory research in niche areas to support human development.
- Developing approaches, tools and methodologies in specific areas to help individuals, organisations, governments (specifically ministries of Education, Health and Women’s Affairs) and youth networks maximise their potential to contribute to peace and stability.

9.2 How sport can contribute

In conflict and post-conflict scenarios sport is by no means a singular solution to the challenges faced by social and political actors and its contributions must not be overstated. But, if carefully managed, sport-based approaches can make a positive contribution to peace-building and conflict management (Sugden 2010). Sports contributions can include symbolic gestures, facilitating dialogue and promoting connectivity and shared experience. It is clear that for sport-based approaches to be effective they must be co-ordinated and integrated into broader processes.

Table 9.1 sets out how sport can be used to contribute to advancing peace and stability in the key areas of promoting dialogue and interaction and supporting the well-being, recovery and re-integration of children, youth and adults.

Table 9.1 Sport and the Commonwealth’s priority areas for advancing peace and stability

<i>How sport can contribute</i>	<i>Considerations for policy formation and development planning</i>
Promoting dialogue and interaction (priority areas for promoting peace and stability)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In many contexts sport is perceived as neutral and can therefore offer an alternative space for dialogue and interaction where tension or mistrust exists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include sporting activities and tournaments in strategies to promote dialogue and interaction where tension exists or in post-conflict situations.

(Continued)

Table 9.1 Sport and the Commonwealth’s priority areas for advancing peace and stability (cont.)

<i>How sport can contribute</i>	<i>Considerations for policy formation and development planning</i>
Promoting dialogue and interaction (priority areas for promoting peace and stability) (cont.)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In other domains sport participation, sport volunteering and community sport organisations can generate social ties (Burnett 2006) that can help build shared identities and possible fellowship among groups that might otherwise be inclined to treat each other with distrust (Rookwood 2008). • As sport is malleable and flexible these relationships may occur between individuals, groups and/or organisations and their communities. This is important as approaches that work on multiple levels, including socio-political levels, have the greatest impact (SDP IWG 2008). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the use of sport in peace and conflict management is wholly integrated with broader conflict prevention strategies; based on a thorough situational analysis; and underpinned by extensive risk management processes. • Intensify preventative measures to limit high profile sport teams/competitions being used as platforms for inflammatory behaviour or actions. • Engage high profile athletes and teams to reinforce messages of tolerance and integration.
Supporting the well-being, recovery and reintegration of children, youth and adults (priority areas for promoting peace and stability and giving support in post-disaster contexts)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The physical and mental health benefits of participation in sport are well documented and apply in post-conflict and post-disaster contexts (Knechtle 2004; Seiler 2001). • Through regularly scheduled activity, children and adults can begin to regain a sense of security and normalcy and enjoy periods of respite from the often overwhelming challenge of reconstruction. • In particular, sport and play have been shown to be therapeutic in helping children overcome trauma (Colliard and Hanley 2005). • Sport can be an effective part of wider efforts to reintegrate ex-combatants into their communities, including child combatants (SDP IWG 2008), by providing an environment in which rebuild relationships and trust with adults (Gasser et al. 2004). • Sport can provide a ‘safe space’ in which participation should be encouraged,, alongside other interventions and strategies, to help victims of conflict and natural disasters regain a sense of normality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate sport and physical activity into work with victims of conflict, displaced populations and in post-disaster contexts. • Engage community members in the design and delivery of programmes in such circumstances. • Use sport to signpost victims of conflict to other support services. • Strengthen safeguarding mechanisms for sport or physical activity programmes to cope with the additional vulnerability of participants in post-conflict or post-disaster contexts. • Integrate members of the wider community into sport interventions to maximise reach and promote connectivity with other peace-building and conflict management approaches.

9.3 Case study examples

Sport and play for inter-ethnic dialogue – Sri Lanka

Initiative	<p>In Sri Lanka sport and play are used as tools to promote dialogue amongst ethnic groups since sport is perceived as apolitical, ‘unsuspicious’ and a ‘safe’ entry point. Children and youth are ideal for involving parents, key leaders and extended village communities in the dialogue process.</p> <p>The project provides children and youth with life skills and non-formal education that are not taught in school or at home. Children learn to deal with differences and conflicts in a non-violent manner through the use of sport, and develop social values and skills such as fair play and respect for ethnic and religious diversity. Their emotional stability is also strengthened by increasing self-esteem and resilience.</p> <p>The project’s strategy has been to build the capacities of local youth as coaches to promote inter-ethnic dialogue among Sinhalese and Tamil children and youth. The sport and play activities are conducted three times a week. The pilot project is a contribution towards inter-culturalism in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural post-conflict context. It takes place at the grass roots level where children and youth interact with each other through guided sport and play activities, three times a week in ethnic and gender mixed groups, and through additional activities promoting inter-cultural understanding.</p>
Further information	<p>www.fpforum.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=106:swiss-academy-for-development-sad&catid=48:main-presentations&Itemid=75</p>

Peace Players International-Northern Ireland – United Kingdom

Initiative	<p>Peace Players International-Northern Ireland (PPI-NI) is an independently registered cross-community peace-building organisation in Northern Ireland that uses sport – in particular, basketball – to unite and educate young people from Protestant and Catholic communities.</p> <p>By regularly competing together on mixed teams, children from these historically divided groups discover common ground and forge new friendships, while a mix of local and international facilitators help them adjust to the complexities that accompany growing up in a post-conflict society.</p> <p>In its last programmatic year, PPI-NI worked with roughly 900 participants, while providing services to eight of the 10 most disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland.</p>
Further information	<p>www.peaceplayersintl.org</p>

Laureus Sport for Good Foundation Kickz programme – United Kingdom

Initiative	<p>The Laureus Sport for Good Foundation raises funds to provide financial and practical support to more than 100 projects that use the power of sport to provide coaching and education to young people in some of the most challenging and deprived environments around the world. The Laureus Kickz programme is one of three used to reduce youth crime.</p> <p>Sport has benefits for everyone, but it can be a particularly powerful tool for tackling youth crime, helping to engage disadvantaged and disillusioned young people who are hard to reach in other ways. Kickz is a national programme, funded by the Premier League and Metropolitan Police, that uses football to work with hard-to-reach young people in deprived areas. Arsenal Football Club delivers Kickz in Elthorne Park, north London, and the project has helped transform the local area. Kickz gets kids off the street and playing football, and since the project started, youth crime has dropped by two thirds within a one-mile radius of Elthorne Park. Research by Laureus has also found that for every £1.00 invested in the project, £7.00 of value is created for the state and the local community. A large proportion of this comes from savings to the victims of youth and gang violence that used to be common in the area.</p>
Policy framework	UK Every Child Matters and Children's Act 2004; Youth Inclusion Programme.
Further information	www.laureus.com/sites/default/files/publications/teenage_kicks_report_final.pdf

Sport and Recreation in Temporary Learning Centres – Pakistan

Initiative

Sport can play an important role in restoring and sustaining mental health. In regions affected by natural disasters or war, where trauma is widespread, sport can be highly effective in helping to normalise life. Through regularly scheduled activity, children and adults can begin to regain a sense of security and normalcy and enjoy periods of respite from the often overwhelming challenge of reconstruction. Recognising that sport and play have proven extremely therapeutic for children in overcoming trauma, UNICEF developed a kit of materials for children displaced by war and natural disaster. The kit allows children to participate in team sport in a supportive, non-competitive environment led by a teacher or trained volunteer.

One such example is the provision of education for affected children in post-flood Pakistan. The initiative integrated sport into temporary learning centres (TLCs) to support the psychosocial recovery of the flood affected children and to help them to access education.

Some 430 TLCs were established to respond to the learning and recreation needs of flood affected children in five districts of northern Sindh. School supplies inclusive of sports and recreation kits, 'school in boxes', early child development kits, floor mats, black boards and water coolers were provided for children and teachers at all the TLCs. Overall, the TLCs supported 20,575 flood affected children (39.5 per cent girls).

Of the 433 teachers, sports facilitators and social mobilisers working for the TLCs, approximately 50 per cent are women. They are trained on classroom management skill, emotional therapy, child friendly teaching methodologies and recreation activities.

Further information

www.unicef.org/infobycountry/pakistan_60366.html