

ROLE OF SPORTS IN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Sport forms part of human and social development; it can contribute to social cohesion, tolerance and integration and is an effective channel for physical and socio-economic development. Sport can be a powerful agent for change that should be leveraged by individuals, businesses, governments and elite athletes to drive significant positive development and progress in a social, economic and political context. Through sport, people identify new role models in society. Sport provides not only health benefits for young participants but also instils qualities such as team work, discipline and a competitive spirit that prove valuable in adulthood. Sport can contribute to economic development by creating additional sources of income including the manufacture of sporting goods, the development of sport related services and infrastructure or the hosting of sports events. Sport is a part of society as both an educational fixture and an entertainment enterprise. Sport is a means of exchange and understanding among people of various backgrounds, nationalities and beliefs and promotes expression beyond traditional barriers. It also offers a cost-effective tool to meet many development and peace challenges.

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INTRDUCTION

The role of sport in society has been debated for many decades. Sport is a part of society as both an educational fixture and an entertainment enterprise. Sport forms part of human and social development; it can contribute to social cohesion, tolerance and integration and is an effective channel for physical and socio-economic development. As a universal language, sport can be a powerful medium for social and economic change: it can be utilized to bridge cultural gaps, resolve conflict and educate people in ways that very few activities can. The goal of the Sports Council is to examine the proposition that sport can be a powerful agent for change that should be leveraged by individuals, businesses, governments and elite athletes to drive significant positive development and progress in a social, economic and political context.

DIMENSIONS

1. **Value of sport:** Sport is a means of exchange and understanding among people of various backgrounds, nationalities or beliefs, and promotes expression beyond traditional barriers. The rules of the game transcend differences and inequality and help redefine success and performance. Through sport, people identify new role models in society.
2. **Sport demographics and health:** Physical activity has a crucial social impact on society's health and well-being as well as healthcare costs. A connection also exists between being physically active and living a healthy lifestyle. But as the Western world grows older, sport must reinvent itself to deal with this demographic shift.
3. **Sport and education:** Sport provides not only health benefits for young participants but also instils qualities such as team work, discipline and a competitive spirit that prove valuable in adulthood. It therefore warrants a prominent place in the educational system.
4. **Sport and politics:** Sport and politics often go hand-in-hand. Events such as football matches and the Olympic Games can be vehicles for improving understanding between countries.
5. **Sport and economic development:** Sport can contribute to economic development by creating additional sources of income including the manufacture of sporting goods, the development of sportrelated services and infrastructure or the hosting of sports events. Is government policy needed to elevate the importance of sport? How much investment can developing countries justify to promote sport, compared to other urgent social programmes?
6. **International trade in sporting goods:** Of concern in the past decade have been the relocation of production in developing countries, their specialization in the production of low cost sporting products or poor working conditions in the sporting goods industry – particularly the issue of child labour.
7. **Sport and social entrepreneurship:** An opportunity to build sport social entrepreneurship that fuels both social change and job creation exists. This can be driven primarily through the emerging hybrid of entrepreneurship and the NGO movement.

- 8. Dark side of sport:** The increasing monetary and partisan nature of sport means that it can potentially give rise to violent and illegal activity or transactions that may not be in a community's interest. Examples include violence between athletes or spectators, the use of performance enhancing drugs, or the bribery and ownership of clubs by individuals who are motivated by non-sporting factors.

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The increasing monetary and partisan nature of sports means that it can potentially give rise to violent and illegal activity. The increasing violence in Hockey, Boxing, Mixed Martial Arts etc. that turned real ugly real fast. Some have even debated that the public should be concerned, but not surprised, by the violence in sports today because those involved are mirroring the actions of our society. So, sports play a vital role in society both positively and negatively.

SPORT AS A VEHICLE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

The use of sport to promote peace and development is not entirely new; the Olympics are a historic example of sport used for a higher purpose. However, until recently, sport has remained on the sidelines of mainstream humanitarian and development programming, considered a luxury in the context of other development objectives. Now, though, there is a growing understanding that sport does not have to compete with other priorities but can actually be a means for addressing them. The United Nations Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace affirmed this notion, concluding in its 2003 report that "sport offers a cost-effective tool to meet many development and peace challenges, and help achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

A recent international movement is growing around the use of sport for development and peace, as evidenced by some of the following key events:

1. In 2001, the Inter-American Development Bank announced it would use sport to promote economic and social development.
2. Also in 2001, created a new position, Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Sport for Development and Peace, and tapped former Swiss president, Adolf Ogi, to fill the post. Ogi is charged with identifying opportunities to use sport within UN programs and to build partnerships between the UN and sports institutions.
3. In 2002, Mr. Ogi and Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, convened the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace to

discuss experiences and lessons learned and make recommendations regarding the use of sport by UN programs.

4. In February 2003, the first International Conference on Sport and Development passed the “Maggingen Declaration,” affirming delegates’ commitment to sport for development and peace and calling on others to support the movement. Numerous other international conferences have moved the discussion forward. An International Working Group will spend the next four years identifying best practices and guidelines for sport for development and peace.
5. On November 3, 2003, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 58/5 encouraging governments to use sport to advance their development and peace and declaring 2005 the “International Year of Sport and Physical Education.”
6. The International Olympic and Paralympics Committees have both made commitments to support the use of sport for development and to improve the lives of people living in the most disadvantaged regions of the world.

At the field level, donor agencies, international and indigenous humanitarian and development organizations, national and local governments, sports ministries and federations, Olympic and Paralympic Committees, leagues and clubs, schools, and individuals have generated a host of creative and effective ways to leverage the power of sport.

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