

THEMATIC PROFILE

SPORT AND PEACE-BUILDING

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Introduction

This thematic profile includes an overview of some of the main issues relating to sport and peace-building. The first sub-section provides a brief introduction to the terms used in this topic. The next sub-section locates the role of sport in peace-building processes, based on practical experience of several well-known initiatives in this area. This sub-section also outlines the role of sport in building national identity.

The third sub-section outlines the role sport can play in the reintegration of former child combatants and children affected by armed conflict.

This topic also includes general guidelines on the practical considerations of using sport in peace-building efforts and a list of current initiatives in sport and peace-building.

The purpose of the section on Sport & Peace-building is to provide an overview of the main topics and concerns in this area. At no point should this section be considered to be exhaustive in its coverage of all areas and information relating to Sport & Peace-building, but that it rather seeks to provide a gateway for interested parties to access and be directed towards further in-depth sources of information.

Defining peace and relationship-building

Current definitions of 'peace-building' go beyond an exclusive focus on the post-conflict phase and emphasise the building of relationships between people as a key component of peace-building.

For example, Lederach (the well-known conflict resolution scholar) has defined 'peace-building' as:

"...a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships..."

The Institute for Multi-track Diplomacy has highlighted the need to build strong interpersonal and inter-group relations throughout society and considers this to be a key principle in peace-building efforts. Lederach has emphasised the importance of creating safe and accessible social spaces or 'relational spaces' as part of peace-building. In this sense, the creation of these social spaces (through the use of sport) can be innovative in broadening and deepening peace-building initiatives.

The nature of conflicts since the Cold War is widely perceived to have changed, taking place between rival groups within a nation state rather than between nation states. The OECD cites 'cycles of civil violence' as characterising these conflicts, which occur predominantly in developing countries, affecting civilians the most. Increasing attention is thus being paid to the role of civil society in peace-building processes, emphasising a 'relational' response to reducing violence and tension between competing groups by fostering positive relationships.

Research and practical experience on the use of sport in peace-building efforts warns against the *essentialising of sport* as one of the greatest dangers when designing and implementing sports programmes in a conflict or post-conflict situation. As emphasised in a vast amount of practical experience in peace-building, a holistic approach is needed to build sustained stability and peace in communities and nations facing conflict – a holistic approach that is sensitive and tailored to the political, economic and socio-cultural context. Sport, as such, should be considered as just one among many components of this approach.

Promoting sport as a tool in peace-building may seem surprising when contrasted with the phenomenon of hooliganism, most commonly associated with professional football. Fan violence in sport cannot be explained by solely focusing on the sport itself. Research has shown that football hooliganism is a 'peripheral phenomenon' to the game and is 'primarily rooted in the changing nature of post-industrial society, rather than being specifically caused by the game itself'. If anything, this serves to remind critical thinkers that sport will produce positive or negative outcomes, depending on how it is carried out.

Further links

Institute for Multi-track Diplomacy – Score for Peace initiative

<http://imtd.org/cgi-bin/imtd.cgi?page=scoreforpeace>

Score for Peace is the Institute for Multi-track Diplomacy (IMTD)'s sport programme, currently focusing on the relationship between the US and Libya. Plans to expand the project to Venezuela, Algeria and Liberia are underway.

The Role of Sport in Peace-building

The contribution sport can make towards peace-building efforts has generally been considered at the grassroots and nation state levels.

At the grassroots or community level, sport can be seen to provide a useful way of creating an environment in which people can come together to: work towards the same goal, show respect for others and share space and equipment. All these aspects are crucial to peace-building processes and are exemplified by findings from a Peace Players International programme. The programme 'bridging divides' in South Africa uses basketball to bring children and communities together. An assessment of the programme shows that the majority of participants expressed fewer racial stereotypes and less racism compared to children who were not part of the programme. Many participants were in favour of racial integration and further inter-racial socialisation than other children.

A study on the role of sport in fostering social integration among different ethnic groups in South African schools showed that several factors contributed to the use of sport being successful in bringing about exchange and building relationships between different groups, including sport's non-verbal means of communication; sport as a means to engage in collective experience and establish direct physical contact; and sport's ability to transcend class divisions.

The Open Fun Football schools were initiated in Bosnia-Herzegovina, using grassroots football as a means to provide a site for interaction and to build relationships between young people and coaches. Since then, the initiative has expanded to being a reconciliation tool to encourage understanding and tolerance in FYR of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Moldova, Georgia and various other countries in the Balkans, the Caucasus and in the Middle East. The Open Fun Football Schools implemented in eastern Europe and the Middle East organised street events for the wider community, which have sometimes acted as the first significant post-war contact between communities that were formerly close but are now deeply hostile to one another.

The United Nations Report on the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005 highlights the benefits that sport can bring in building national identity, especially at the level of elite sport. Sport can provide a positive image of the nation to the international community. Studies on specific cases have shown that sport, especially football, can positively contribute to strengthening national pride and forming a cohesive national identity. For example, a study on the case of football in Liberia shows that football is considered 'a "neutral" pursuit – a common cultural property unspoiled by war'. During the civil conflict, football tournaments were considered the only occasions that produced a sense of national unity.

On the other hand, sport can produce nationalist expressions that are detrimental to peace. For example, the 1956 Olympic water polo match between Hungary and the Soviet Union that took place after the Soviet invasion of Budapest led to violent clashes between the athletes. In addition, many scholars associate the importing of modern sport into former colonies as an explicit strategy of imperialism and conquest. In this sense, it is necessary to consider both the potential dangers and benefits of sport in forming national identity.

Recommended Reading

Keim, M. (2006) **Sport as Opportunity for Community Development and Peace Building in South Africa**

http://www.toolkitsportdevelopment.org/html/topic_8C99D814-CFBC-494E-8BAD-8C51BCAEA5BE_6458A396-8CE6-4E87-BD61-6C626363A7AB_1.htm

This paper addresses if and under what conditions sport can play an important role in South Africa. In the struggle against the system of apartheid in South Africa, sport played a crucial role as a dynamic part of civil society. While popular culture reinforces the belief in the positive potential of sport, research has articulated corresponding factors and conditions that must be met if the positive value of sport is to be enjoyed.

Sport's contribution to Peace-building

<http://www.toolkitsportdevelopment.org/html/resources/E8/E895C25D-9D6B-4BE0-8204-16FDCED74975/Tabel%20two%20Sport%20and%20Peace%20paper%20Pelle%20Kvalsund.pdf>

A tabular summary by Pelle Kvalsund (International Sport & Development consultant, Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports) of the ways in which sport can play a role in peace-building processes.

Reintegration of Child Soldiers through Sport

The reintegration of former child combatants and children affected by armed conflict into their former or new communities is considered to be one of the most difficult challenges in peace-building.

A recent UN study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children reports that government and armed groups around the world have recruited tens of thousands of children, most of them under 18 (many under age 10) in the past 30 years. The report states that children need the intellectual and emotional stimulation that is provided by structured group activities such as play, participating in sports, drawing and storytelling. Research has shown that sport may help children and young people who have been involved in armed conflict, by drawing them out of violent routines and offering them socially-acceptable and structured patterns of behaviour.

Research on the reintegration of former child combatants in West Africa has shown that participation in sport helped to make a shift from a social context in which violence is 'normalised', towards one in which working together as a team is recognised and acknowledged in 'peaceful and socially-accepted ways'.

The re-introduction of former child combatants back into the community is a difficult process and is sometimes unsuccessful. Reintegration requires community-based rehabilitation projects, which enable former child soldiers to access education, address the trauma and psychological effects of being involved in armed conflict, and to create opportunities for an alternative to violent conflict.

Further links

UNICEF sports initiative in Liberia for former child soldiers

http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/liberia_27400.html

UNICEF has used sports in its activities with children and former child soldiers in Liberia.

Practical Considerations of Using Sport in Peace-building

Sport as part of a holistic approach to peace-building

Sport programmes that focus on peace-building must ensure that their efforts are part of a wider holistic approach to peace-building and conflict transformation. It is recommended that sport programmes in conflict and post-conflict situations are implemented as part of comprehensive peace-building strategies.

Sensitivity

Sport is considered as a social construct i.e. socio-cultural norms and values dictate the ways in which sport and physical activity is viewed and is carried out in a community. Programmes that use sport must take into account the ways in which sport and physical activity is constructed in a given conflict context and should be implemented in ways that are sensitive to this context.

Accessibility

All groups must have access to the sports programme, which should aim to be as inclusive as possible. Efforts must be made to ensure that all groups have access to the infrastructure, including access to play spaces and equipment, and transportation to and from the play areas. Sports programmes must be appropriately timed and scheduled to cater to the target group. Sports programmes should be welcoming, accessible and social support made available for isolated groups.

Local vs. externally-driven processes

Experience warns against 'parachuting' workers, volunteers or even celebrities into conflict or post-conflict situations and advises that external actors involved in peace-building efforts are aware of their role in 'insider-outsider' power dynamics. Local community-based development approaches to peace-building through sport must be carried out in ways that allow the community to guide the process. In this sense, the 'do no harm' approach is crucial to any undertaking that uses sport in peace-building – sport programmes are implemented in ways that enhance local peace-building efforts and do not operate in ways that undermine local resources and processes. Furthermore, the informed consent of participants and not just of their political representatives is essential to the success of a sports programme that aims to contribute effectively to peace-building.

Barriers to interaction

Sport programmes should ensure that the kind of interaction between participants encourages mutual acceptance and tolerance. Direct physical contact between participants has been cited as a tool to actively provoke the emergence of intensive relationships. Studies have shown that traditional games and dance were found to be effective in overcoming initial obstacles or barriers to interaction.

Recommended Reading

Kvalsund, P. (2007) **Sport and Peace Building**

<http://www.toolkitsportdevelopment.org/html/resources/E0/E034DC82-E2BB-4827-AC8B-E7D1BDFCB288/Sport%20and%20Peace%20paper%20Pelle%20Kvalsund.pdf>

This document provides an analysis of issues relating to the use of sport as a conflict prevention and transformation tool.

Current Initiatives

A number of sport-for-peace-building initiatives have recently received high-level support:

Peace and Sport

Peace and Sport was founded under the High Patronage of HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco. The organisation uses sport to promote mutual respect, sharing and tolerance by implementing programmes in post-conflict zones which lack social cohesion and in areas affected by extreme poverty. The first Peace and Sport Annual Forum was launched in November 2007.

Website: www.peace-sport.org

Generations for Peace

Generations for Peace is an initiative spear-headed by HRH Prince Faisal Al Hussein of Jordan. The initiative was launched in April 2007 and the first Pilot Camp held in Amman, Jordan in October 2007. Generations for Peace programmes teach sport, peace education and peer-to-peer learning models for young people in conflict situations.

Website: www.generationsforpeace.com

PeacePlayers International

PeacePlayers International uses basketball to bridge social divides, develop leaders, and educate children in regions of the world separated by civil discord. The organisation currently operates programs in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Cyprus, New Orleans and South Africa that bring together children from conflicting groups to play together and acquire life skills that will enable them to build strong relationships with one another.

Website: www.peaceplayersintl.org

The Peres Center for Peace

The Peres Center for Peace was founded by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres in 1996. The Center focuses on a range of issues affecting the Middle East, including the provision of sport and youth activities. The Sports Unit implements sports projects that facilitate peaceful coexistence and understanding between Israeli and Palestinian children.

Website: www.peres-center.org

Project Case Studies

<p><u>Project Case Study</u></p> <p>Open Fun Football Schools</p>
<p><u>Target groups</u></p> <p>Children from 7 to 12 years old, local sport volunteers, parents, football clubs, municipalities, ministries and national football associations</p>
<p><u>Location</u></p> <p>The Balkans (since 1998), South Caucasus (since 2003) and the Middle East (since 2005).</p>
<p><u>Organisations involved</u></p> <p><i>Lead organisation:</i> Cross Cultures Project Association (DK) <i>Partner organisation(s) and sponsors:</i> National Open Fun Football Schools teams, local municipalities and football clubs, national football federations and ministries of sport and youth in the project countries, UEFA, the Football Association of Norway, Sida, The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Novo Nordisk, Rockwool Foundation (Denmark), Velux and StatoilHydro.</p>
<p><u>About this Project</u></p> <p>Open Fun Football Schools (OFFS) aims to facilitate friendships and sport cooperation between people living in divided communities, particularly those affected by conflict. Read more here on the how the OFFS came into being.</p> <p>Open Fun Football Schools (OFFS) aims to facilitate friendships and sport cooperation between people living in divided communities, particularly those affected by conflict. The OFFS project started in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1998, and has now extended throughout the Balkan region, South Caucasus and the Middle East. OFFS and other community-based children's sports initiatives rally children and adults of different social and ethnic groups around an activity of common interest such as ball games. An Open Fun Football School is community-based in nature. Each school lasts five days with a minimum of 200 boys and girls from 7-12 years old, 2-3 voluntary leaders, 15 voluntary coaches and 12 coach assistants – all volunteers are locally recruited. A football pitch or a playground is divided into 12 areas, called stations. The 200 children are divided into groups of 16 to 20 kids (depending on the age category) and during the five days, the groups systematically rotate between the 12 stations. All children are actively present on the pitch/playground at the same time.</p>
<p><u>Impact</u></p> <p>The OFFS has produced a number of changes in capacity building, institution-building, value-based networks and providing funds. Read more here on the impact of the OFFS programme.</p> <p>Capacity-building: Since 1998, the OFFS project has trained more than 13,000 local volunteers in the Open Fun Football concept and basic principles of non-discrimination, tolerance and equality. Partnerships have been formed with more than 2,300 local football clubs and 1,600 municipalities organising 743 multi-ethnic football schools attended by 150,000 children and supported by parents through local parents' committees.</p>

Institution-building: OFFS has stimulated the formation of hundreds of local football clubs that organise football for all children regardless of gender, talent, ethnic or social backgrounds. At the national level, several national football associations have integrated children's grassroots football for boys and girls into their activity portfolio.

Value-based network: OFFS has created very strong, dedicated and diverse national platforms for leaders, coaches, parents, teachers, sport club managers, municipal authorities, sport politicians and children in the Balkans and in the Trans-Caucasus.

Funds: In 2007, more than 300 local municipalities financed the education of local OFFS volunteers. Considerable financial support has been provided by governments and corporate social responsibility sponsorships from local and international corporations, among others, to co-fund the equipment required.

Lessons Learned

Implementing the Open Fun Football Schools in cooperation with local football clubs and municipalities has provided an institutional platform to build on, thereby securing local ownership of the project and creating lasting structures. The extensive recruitment of local volunteers in all project areas has further strengthened the rooting and network ties to most layers in the local communities where OFFS operates. National OFFS offices are indispensable for building local ownership combined with the donations of sport equipment to the participating football clubs and other partners in the project.

The measurement and justification of impact constitutes a major challenge in a peace-building/tolerance-building intervention such as the OFFS project. OFFS indicators are monitored and verified in the field with regard to effects achieved in building sustainability, advocating social responsibility and facilitating civil society actions. However, the direct and indirect impact of the OFFS operations are much more comprehensive and therefore Cross Cultures intends to take further steps to improve the monitoring and evaluation capacity within the OFFS operation during 2008-2010 so that new relevant indicators may be identified and assessed in the course of implementation.

Recommendations

The OFFS case provides a learning example on the use of sport as a tool to rebuild trust and relationships in communities affected by conflict. Read more here on the suggestions from OFFS for similar projects.

The Open Fun Football Concept is a productive way to work against anxiety, insecurity and mistrust, in turning these negative emotions into something positive through ball games. What is important is thus the playful aspect - the joy derived from playing - rather than the results, the score or improving technical skills. The key is to create a project environment that is conducive to relationship-building.

The point of departure for community-based reconciliation activities should be a genuine common ground built on existing interests/values shared by divided communities rather than a "compromise ground" built on a merging of various divided interests of divided communities.

Voices from the field

Parent in Sumgait, Azerbaijan:

"We are meeting people from the local community because of the football school and we have become friends. We visit each other privately and we do not feel as refugees anymore, instead we feel we have become part of the local community. Our greatest wish is that a new Open Fun Football School will be organised here again next summer."

Dragana, Serbian girl from Foca, Republica Srpska, Bosnia-Herzegovina:

"My parents were not happy to let me go without them, but when I returned home from the school I was so happy and full of good experiences so that I hardly could wait to wake up again to meet with my new friends. The last day at the football school we exchanged phone numbers and addresses to maintain our friendship."

Ginam, 12-year old girl participating in street sport sessions in Damascus, Syria:

"I like coming here. It is better than school and than playing at home alone. Here I meet a lot of my friends and other children. In the school we cannot play like here ... the school has no equipment and the teachers are not as funny as the trainers here."

Mr Mazen Ramadan, OFFS country director, CCPA-Lebanon:

"Nobody thought it would be possible; but the project has showed that there is a big will in Lebanon to make a better future for children, and that voluntarism in the country can make a lot possible, especially when it is about the welfare of children and their future. There is a huge potential in the country and a big interest in being a volunteer for a good cause like this."

John Telford, team leader for external evaluation team in 2004:

"This is an exceptional project. It has been effective and in specific, individual cases very impacting. It is highly relevant, particularly so in the country of its origin (Bosnia and Herzegovina - BiH). Its achievements are numerous, leading to prestigious international awards./.../ This is arguably the best project the evaluators have had the privilege of evaluating."

Project Case Study

2007 Lofa Peace Dream Cup

Target group

Children, youth, community members

Location

Lofa County, Liberia

Organisations involved

UNHCR, Peace Cups Korea, Right To Play, GTZ, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Liberian Football Association, Liberia National Red Cross, Local Schools

Lead organisation: Right To Play, Liberia

Partner organisation(s): UNHCR, GTZ, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Liberia Football Association, local schools

About this Project

The project aims to provide structured sport activities for children and young people in Liberia affected by armed conflict. The project also aims to contribute towards peace-building.

The education of children and youth in Liberia and their opportunity to grow in peace has been disrupted by a 14-year civil conflict. Despite the returning peace, there are still tensions in parts of the country due to religious and ethnic differences. One such area is in Lofa County where Right To Play has a sub-office working to improve the lives of children through play and sport.

Objectives of the project are:

1. To implement regular structured sport and play activities containing key life skills messages for children and youth within targeted counties of intervention.
2. To contribute to the building of peaceful and cohesive communities in post-war Liberia through the use of sport and play.

Interventions include the training of volunteer leaders, coaches and referees; capacity building workshops on organisational skills; mixed teams football tournament; infrastructure upgrades; equipment provision; and community mobilisation.

Impact

The impact of this project has been in imparting life skills to children and youth and including girls in leadership positions. But the project has also faced a number of challenges. Read more here to find out about the impact of the project.

Facts and Figures

240 children and youth participated in week-long mixed team football tournament where “only girls can score” and regular activities by trained coaches. The tournament attracted people across all ethnic, religious, gender, and age boundaries. 42 community trained members implemented and managed sport for development activities. Messages of peace, cooperation, communication and inclusion have been embraced by about 3,000 individuals from the two districts. Lofa County now has four additional playing fields with areas for spectator seating. Working relationships were fostered among international, national and community

organisations including the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Liberian Football Association and the County Youth Coordinator.

Lessons Learned

The Lofa Peace Dream Cup demonstrated the unifying effects of sports on the community.

Through the training of volunteer leaders, sustainability was enhanced. Through sport and play, important life skills were imparted to children and youth and by including girls in leadership positions as coaches, referees, organisers and players, there was a resulting reduction in the marginalisation of women.

However, certain challenges and unmet needs were identified, with many people in extremely rural areas that could not be reached. Furthermore, there are few trained volunteer leaders with any disabilities, thus children with disabilities are being trained by persons without disabilities. There are also only a few female coaches and referees.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations have emerged from this project. Read more here for the suggestions of Right to Play based on their experiences.

By spending more time in training coaches and volunteer leaders, the quality of the programme and improved motivation may be ensured. Efforts should be made to link up with women's cooperatives and organisations focused on people with disabilities for training and recruitment as coaches/leaders. Volunteer leaders who engaged in the advanced training can now take on significantly more responsibility in organising future events, particularly in the planning stages.

Voices from the field

Vivian: Right to Play project participant

"The tournament was very much in line with community development. I am looking forward to next tournament. As a Kissi woman I felt good to mix with young people from other tribes in sports. I believe sports can bring people of different tribes and faiths together."

Varney Koroma: Right To Play Volunteer Leaders and Equipment Manager

"This was first of its kind with only girls allowed to score. Boys and girls played together."

Sia Anthony: Right To Play Volunteer Leader and Referee

"I found refereeing difficult initially but now I'm trying to do my best. I am committing myself to be an ambassador of Right To Play because I love their programme."