



**Communiqué**  
from the  
**Forum on Productive Youth  
Development through Sport in Africa**

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## Communiqué

**Productive Youth Development (PYD)** focuses on the “whole” child, including her/his intellectual, social, emotional and physical development, and seeks to maximise a young person’s potential, healthy personal development and her/his ability to contribute positively to society. Approaches to PYD aim to contribute to the welfare, social productivity and social inclusion of current and future generations of young people by understanding and promoting their personal development and employability.

**Sport<sup>1</sup>, when harnessed effectively, can be an important agent of PYD.** Sport’s universal appeal transcends political, cultural and socio-economic boundaries. It possesses tremendous capacity as a communications platform and can be used to deliver important educational messages. It has an inherent ability to connect people and groups – bringing young people together and improving their ability to work collectively. Sport’s capacity for integration can promote the inclusion of youth that have been traditionally excluded – in particular those that have been marginalised due to identity, background or ability. Sport also has the potential to empower, motivate and inspire young people in a way that few other interventions can – along with an inherent ability to draw on, and nurture, individual strengths and capacities.

From June 16-18, 2009, a forum on **Productive Youth Development through Sport in Africa**, was held in Nairobi, Kenya as a joint initiative of the *United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace* and the *Jacobs Foundation* and in collaboration with the *Swiss Academy for Development* and the *Mathare Youth Sports Association*. During the forum, more than 60 key stakeholders from the sport, development and PYD movements came together in the spirit of dialogue and cooperation to:

- 1) critically analyse the potential use of sport as a tool for PYD;
- 2) identify existing knowledge gaps limiting the use of sport for PYD;
- 3) seek methods for determining the effectiveness of sport for PYD;
- 4) determine the best ways to share resources, information, experience and lessons learned; and
- 5) agree upon future recommendations for action.

**Practitioners, programmers, experts and advocates participating in the forum unanimously agreed that sport has a unique capacity to advance Productive Youth Development, particularly in Africa** where young people face compounded challenges related to poverty, disease and conflict, and lack opportunities for advancement.

**Sport’s popularity can be used as a ‘catch’** to entice hard-to-reach youth to participate in, and stay actively involved in, PYD programmes. Furthermore, **sport can be used as a direct teaching mechanism** to contribute to the achievement of specific PYD objectives. When used as part of a holistic approach to larger capacity-building interventions, sport can help to equip young people with the skills and knowledge they need to navigate key life transitions successfully.

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<sup>1</sup> **Sport** refers to “all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being, and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organised or competitive sport and indigenous sports and games”. Source: United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (2003) and Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (2008).

**Given its unique characteristics and potential for diverse application, sport can:**

- contribute to physical and psycho-social health and development;
- contribute to identity formation and build self-awareness, self-esteem, and confidence;
- improve concentration, problem-solving, judgment and decision-making;
- provide opportunities to release aggression, decrease anxiety and alleviate depression;
- provide relief from trauma and assist in returning a sense of normalcy in post-conflict situations;
- facilitate the acquisition of positive values (e.g. commitment to lifelong learning, personal responsibility and active citizenship) and provide second-chances to marginalised youth;
- enhance employability by nurturing the development of transferable life and social skills, including self-efficacy, resiliency, leadership, perseverance, teamwork and cooperation.

Before selecting sport as the preferred intervention for PYD, programme designers must first evaluate its value-added. Programme designers using sport for PYD must recognise that sport alone is not enough to guarantee positive outcomes. If PYD goals are to be achieved, sport-based interventions must strive to incorporate the following values and characteristics.

**Focus on holistic youth development:** Ensure the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development of young people is central to the programme design.

**Commit to quality:** Build programmes on successful methodologies and best practices to ensure interventions are constructive and have the best possible chances of achieving desired outcomes.

**Use integrated approaches:** Combine sport for PYD activities with other activities of interest to young people, and deliver them in settings they can easily access (i.e. schools, community centres).

**Focus on mentoring:** Promote sustained and meaningful interactions with positive adult role models, including teachers, coaches, parents and caregivers.

**Prioritise the development of life skills and positive social values:** Ensure that the development and capacity-building of young people is at the centre of the experience by prioritising the development of life- and social skills in programme designs.

**Encourage youth participation and leadership:** Provide young people with meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making and take on leadership roles of value in the community.

Although a considerable amount of information exists with regards to PYD through sport, some knowledge gaps persist. These gaps make it difficult to draw conclusions about the long-term impacts of Sport for PYD on the trajectories of young people and, as a result, may hinder the further development of effective Sport for PYD programmes. To overcome knowledge gaps that currently exist, practitioners, programmers, experts and advocates alike must strive to inform existing best practices in support of Sport for PYD.



## **LESSONS LEARNED from practitioners, programmers, experts and advocates**

In an effort to reduce some of the knowledge gaps that presently exist, participants of the Productive Forum on Youth Development took stock of key lessons learned thus far. Participants acknowledged that the following practices and methods should be considered when designing, delivering and promoting Sport for PYD.

### **Lessons Learned from Practitioners:**

**Facilitate youth leadership and skills-building:** Provide young people with opportunities to take on incremental levels of responsibility and leadership and encourage their input in day-to-day decision making.

**Adapt programmes to ensure the participation of young people with different ability levels:** Make efforts to ensure that all young people – regardless of their ability level – have an opportunity to participate.

**Act responsibly:** Create an environment conducive to learning – deliver programmes in safe spaces using structured and predictable formats and act as a positive and consistent adult role model at all times.

**Communicate openly:** Communicate openly, honestly and regularly with parents, members of the community and with programme designers and managers.

### **Lessons Learned from Programme Designers:**

**Commit to quality:** Base programme designs on the most up-to-date evidence and research. Use integrated approaches, i.e. position sport as part of a larger intervention to promote the health and skills development of young people and not simply a programme to advance the sporting abilities of youth.

**Consult broadly:** Actively consult with young people – especially those who are traditionally excluded – to ensure their needs and interests are well-represented. Consult broadly with community representatives to ensure local belief structures and community needs are reflected. Work closely with staff and practitioners at the field level to ensure programme goals are warranted, reasonable and achievable.

**Use available resources:** Capitalise on the existing infrastructure, including schools, when selecting delivery methods.

**Support practitioners:** Ensure practitioners are carefully selected and thoroughly trained. Ensure they appreciate their responsibility as role models and that they understand the short- and long-term objectives of the programme. Speak openly, honestly and regularly with them so they feel supported and are comfortable reporting candidly about outcomes and lessons learned.

**Document outcomes:** Establish systematic monitoring and evaluation processes at the earliest stages of programme design to ensure experiences are easily documented, accomplishments are tracked, and outcomes are measured against goals and targets; document lessons learned in a systematic way to facilitate the sharing of best practices.



## Lessons Learned from Academia:

**Build the evidence base:** Produce sound and rigorous research to support the use of Sport for PYD. Spearhead the development and execution of scientific evaluations to assess the short, medium, and long-term impacts of Sport for PYD programmes. Develop procedures to measure the longitudinal capacity-building achievements of Sport for PYD interventions.

**Share findings:** Present research findings and evidence gathered through evaluations in digestible and easy-to-understand formats so lessons learned from academia are accessible to, and can be easily applied by, programme designers, practitioners, and advocates alike.

## Lessons Learned from Advocates:

**Consult and collaborate:** Actively consult with a variety of stakeholders from all levels (practitioners, programme designers, academics and other advocates) to ensure key messages are representative of, and informed by, real experiences and true evidence. Promote collaboration amongst the different parties involved in PYD to ensure the movement speaks with one voice and is representative of diverse interests. Promote greater collaboration across sectors to ensure government ministries and funding agencies partner with expert implementing organisations to reduce duplication of efforts and capitalise on strengths and know-how.

**Tailor messages and methods:** Ensure the right messages are relayed to the right people – determine who the key decision makers are before embarking on advocacy campaigns and tailor messages accordingly to influence the target audience.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

While it is evident that a large knowledge-base surrounding Sport for PYD currently exists, the following recommendations require further consideration if the Sport for PYD movement is to successfully move forward:

### 1) Continue to Build the Evidence Base to Support Sport for PYD

- Ensure programme designers and practitioners collaborate with academia to produce relevant and useful research.
- Assist academics to generate evidence that is useful, relevant, accessible and applicable.

### 2) Emphasise Planning and Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation

- Ensure that planning is positioned as a crucial component of the monitoring & evaluation process.
- Empower and encourage local organisations to conduct their own self-evaluations.

### 3) Encourage Knowledge Sharing

- Seek ways to minimise competition and promote collaboration.
- Promote the benefits of both formal and informal networks and communicate them clearly.
- Create a safe space to share lessons learned stemming from failures, as well as successes, so that we might all learn from each others' experiences.

#### **4) Enhance Financial Sustainability**

- Ensure donors are educated about Sport for PYD.
- Avoid using development funds for the development of sport.
- Encourage donors to commit to institutional funding over project-based funding and further encourage multi-year commitments.

#### **5) Promote Leadership**

- Work to ensure that leadership possesses the necessary values and skills.
- Support local ownership and facilitate local leadership.

#### **6) Ensure Broad Participation**

- Include the voice of youth in the programme management cycle and ensure programmes reflect their needs and interests.
- Ensure that parents, caregivers and community members are consulted at all stages of programme planning, delivery and evaluation.

#### **7) Promote Strategic Partnerships**

- Identify the interests, needs and values of potential partners and determine how these align with your own.
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine if your organisation has the capacity needed to manage the partnership prior to making commitments.
- Outline your organisational strengths and limitations and communicate them clearly.
- Manage expectations and outline roles and responsibilities early on. Don't be afraid to modify them when needed.
- Pursue ongoing, active communication and strive to facilitate trust so that each partner feels comfortable sharing challenges as well as successes.
- Promote the transfer of knowledge and skills in addition to finances.

#### **8) Focus on Advocacy**

- Equip young people with the skills and knowledge they need to act as their own advocates.
- Create a space for key issues to be discussed at the community level.
- Activate public interest by utilising the media and frame stories to attract their attention.
- Activate the interest and involvement of governments.
- Work to raise awareness and mobilise support at the UN level.