

Monitoring and evaluation of sports as a tool in HIV/AIDS awareness programmes: Experiences of five selected Non-Governmental Organisations in South Africa

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Abstract

Sport has increasingly been used as a vehicle for Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) awareness programmes, and the use of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has become evident in the performance assessment of sport and development as well as HIV/AIDS programmes. The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of selected Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in monitoring and evaluation of their sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes in South Africa. A qualitative study was carried out among employees of 5 selected NGOs that integrate sport with delivering HIV/AIDS awareness programmes in South Africa. Data were collected through a review of documents, key informant interviews (N=7) and a focus group discussion (N=7). Thematic approach following a descriptive framework was used to analyse data. The findings revealed that the selected NGOs in this study focus on similar HIV prevention messages linked to the key priorities highlighted in the current National Strategic Plan for HIV, sexually transmitted infections and tuberculosis of South Africa. However, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes of the NGOs' HIV/AIDS awareness programmes remain a challenge. Of the five selected NGOs, only one has proven to have substantial documents and reports on monitoring and evaluation outcomes. Lack of M&E functions, as well as outcomes indicators, are critical elements limiting NGOs in demonstrating the outcomes of these HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. Capacity building on M&E is required to support the NGOs in being able to reflect accurate information on their sport-based HIV/AIDS activities and improve the M&E of their programmes.

Keywords: evaluation, monitoring, NGOs, outcomes, sport-based HIV/AIDS programmes.

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Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) require a dedicated effort and demands capacity and resources from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which are often not possible (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Monitoring and evaluation involve a systematic collection and analysis of data to provide information about the

relationship between the objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, anticipated outcomes and impact in achieving a goal of a given programme (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Such information is critical to measure programme/project progress and performance towards achieving objectives, identifying what works and what does not work (Mackay, 2007). Therefore instruments and processes for monitoring and evaluation have to be developed to assist the NGOs.

The recognition of sport as an enabler for development has been re-emphasised in the Millennium Development Goals and more recently in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sport has been highlighted as a platform for health information and education to contribute to the achievement of SDG 3: “Good Health and Well-being” (IOC, 2015). This involves using sport as a tool to provide awareness programmes on various diseases, which include Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS). However, information regarding how these programmes are being monitored and evaluated is lacking. Much has been documented about the gaps in monitoring and evaluation of sport for development programmes (Maleka, 2015). The common criticism of monitoring and evaluation of these programmes is mainly linked to traditional methodologies that are related to the requirements of funders (Levermore, 2011). Such an evaluation approach is criticised for its top-down approach which leads to unequal power relations at all levels of implementation, thus having a negative effect on impact and sustainability (Coalter, 2010; Lindsey, 2016).

Much has been done to respond to HIV/AIDS in South Africa; however, the dynamics of HIV/AIDS transmission pose a challenge in reducing new HIV infections by 50% (Shisana et al., 2014). According to Shisana et al (2014), the level of risky sexual behaviours is reported to be high particularly among young people. There is a need to strengthen HIV prevention programmes (Shisana et al., 2014). The National Strategic Plan for HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and tuberculosis (TB) 2012 - 2016 of South Africa serves as a guideline for developing implementation plans in response to HIV/AIDS at national, provincial, local, district and community or NGO levels (Maleka, 2015). Moreover, the National Strategic Plan encourages all sectors to integrate monitoring and evaluation in all initiatives aimed at responding to HIV/AIDS to measure progress and performance (National Strategic Plan, 2011).

There is increasing interest among governments and NGOs in using sport as a tool to provide HIV/AIDS awareness programmes, particularly among the youth; however, evidence that supports effectiveness of these programmes is still emerging (Kicking AIDS Out, 2010; Mwaanga, 2010; Kaufman, Spencer & Ross, 2013; Langer, 2015). Challenges of monitoring and evaluation of sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes have been well documented in a review of 21 studies conducted by Kaufman, Spencer and Ross (2013). The review

highlighted the lack of randomisation, ongoing monitoring, clear objectives and outcomes indicators as common challenges in the success of these sport-based HIV/AIDS programmes (Kaufman et al., 2013). Of the 21 studies reviewed, 4 were from South Africa and only 1 study was classified as of good quality (Kaufman et al., 2013). Findings from this review have illustrated a need for an improved understanding of how NGOs monitor and evaluate their sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. In South Africa, the role of sport as a tool in responding to HIV/AIDS has been recognized in the National Strategic Plan for HIV, STIs and TB (2011), Sport and Recreation South Africa National Strategic Plan (2012) and White Paper on Sport and Recreation South Africa (2012) (Maleka, 2015). However, it can be argued that both National Plans and the Policy do not provide clear guidelines on how to fast-track the HIV/AIDS activities provided by sport for development NGOs and clubs to ensure the alignment with the National Department of Health and other health-based organisations (Maleka, 2015). According to Mwaanga (2010), the contribution of sport to development does not solely depend on sport, but on all people involved whether as policy makers, leaders, participants, coaches, spectators and the communities at large.

The purpose of this study is to provide constructive support and debate in understanding monitoring and evaluation of HIV/AIDS activities with specific reference to NGOs that integrate sport to respond to HIV/AIDS. Therefore, this study aims to explore the experiences of selected NGOs in monitoring and evaluating their sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes in South Africa. Drawing on experiences of selected NGOs, this study sought to uncover challenges and provide recommendations, in order to inform policy makers and NGOs on optimizing monitoring and evaluation of sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes.

Methodology

Research design

A qualitative study was carried out among employees of 5 selected NGOs to provide information on monitoring and evaluation of sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes in South Africa (Maleka, 2015).

Sample selection for NGOs

Purposive sampling was used to select NGOs. The selection process took place from March to mid – May 2015 and was restricted to 12 NGOs that use sport as a tool to respond to HIV/AIDS in South Africa (Maleka, 2015). This was done to ensure that there were enough NGOs to choose from in the event that some are not eligible for the study purpose or those that did not respond. To select the

NGOs, the author ENM first conducted a web search of the websites of available NGOs that use sport as a tool to respond to HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The selection process proved to be challenging with only 9 NGOs responding out of the 12 contacted. Of the 9 NGOs, 6 were eligible for the study, however only 5 agreed to participate (Maleka, 2015).

Study population and sampling

The plan was to purposefully select 2 employees (1 manager and 1 M&E/information officer/coordinator) from each of the selected NGOs. However, 7 employees (2 programme managers, 2 directors and 3 coordinators) from 5 selected NGOs were available to participate in the study. Two NGOs were each represented by a programme manager and 1 by a director. An M&E director and a coordinator represented another NGO, while another NGO was represented by 2 coordinators (Maleka, 2015).

Data collection and instruments

Data were collected through a review of documents, key informant interviews and a focus group discussion. Data collection began with a review of documents such as project description, annual reports, M&E and project plans, followed by key informant interviews with seven employees of the selected NGOs, using semi-structured open-ended questions (Maleka, 2015). A focus group discussion with the same employees was conducted to probe some critical issues that emerged from key informants' interviews. The key informant interviews lasted for 1.5 to 2 hours and were conducted by author ENM. The focus group discussion lasted for 1 to 1.5 hours and was conducted by a postdoctoral research fellow and author ENM. Permission was requested at the start of all the interviews to take notes and record all interviews. The recorded interviews were prepared, organised and transcribed by author ENM (Maleka, 2015).

Data analysis

Data from the review of documents and key informants' interviews were analysed simultaneously following thematic analysis (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007; Yin, 2014) by author ENM. In this regard, a descriptive framework was developed based on questions regarding implementation, monitoring and evaluation of sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes of selected NGOs. Data were read, organised and analysed according to the framework. The data were then collated into themes and sub-themes. Similarities and differences were identified within the selected NGOs (Maleka, 2015). Data from the focus group discussion were analysed using a thematic approach. It is important to note that the process of data analysis involved moving back and forth between data sources, themes and sub-themes. A brief description

highlighting context and background of selected NGOs, is presented in Table 1. The target populations of the 5 selected NGOs were both female and male youths with age groups as presented in Table 1.

Trustworthiness and credibility

The strategies according to Creswell (2009) were used to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the results. Data from the review of documents and focus group discussion were used for triangulation purpose to complement the information gained from key informant interviews (Maleka, 2015). Author ENM was involved in all stages of data collection and analysis, and constantly compared data with the codes and themes to ensure that there was no shift in the meaning of codes and themes (Maleka, 2015). A postdoctoral research fellow served as a peer examiner by reviewing the study and asking author ENM questions about the study to enhance the accuracy of the results (Maleka, 2015).

Table 1: Description of selected NGOs

| N G O | Provinces* | Age group s | Key HIV messages | Modes of delivering HIV/AIDS intervention |
|-------------|--|---------------------------------|---|---|
| A | WC & LP | 10 - 24 years | Stigma and discrimination, HIV prevention, promoting HCT (HIV counselling and testing) and positive living | Soccer, games, role plays/theatre & video clips |
| B | WC (in rural communities) | under 9; 10 - 18 years | HIV/AIDS knowledge, stigma and discrimination, sexual issues, understanding your body, condom use, abstinence and relationships, positive living while infected with HIV, appropriate time of disclosing, disclosing to a partner, opportunistic infections, management and treatment including adherence to ARV (antiretroviral) treatment | Soccer, games & video clips |
| C | WC & GP (informal settlements); in partnership in KZN, LP & MP | 11 - 19 years | HIV/AIDS knowledge, self-efficacy, gender equitable norms, youth leadership, VMMC, adherence to HIV treatment, HCT, gender-based violence, multiple partners, delayed sexual debut, age-disparate sex, substance abuse, condom use and access to health & support services. | Soccer, games & role plays/theatre |
| D | WC (in townships) | 10 - 14 years | HIV/AIDS knowledge, substance abuse, gender issues and risky behaviours | Soccer, basketball, games, role plays/theatre, poetry writing & video clips |
| E | All SA provinces | 12 - 19 years | HIV/AIDS knowledge, HIV prevention, STIs prevention, teenage pregnancy, behaviour change, condom use, life skills, sexual and reproductive health including sexual rights, VMMC, HCT, TB, STIs and ARV treatment | Games, role plays/theatre, poetry writing & video clips |

Source: Maleka, (2015). *NB: Provinces in column 2 refer to where the selected NGOs conduct their sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. South African (SA) Provinces; Eastern Cape (EC), Free State (FS), Gauteng (GP), Kwa Zulu Natal (KZN), Limpopo (LP), Mpumalanga (MP), North West (NW), Northern Cape (NC) & Western Cape (WC)

Ethics consideration

Ethics clearance was obtained from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) (Project number: 14/3/12). The UWC information sheet was utilised that clearly outlines the purpose, risks and benefits of the study, requirement procedures to keep confidentiality and a letter requesting permission to conduct this study.

Results

Themes and sub-themes from the review of documents and key informants' interviews are presented in Table 2, followed by a summary of key results (in table 3) and then followed by emerging themes from key-informants' interviews and focus group discussion results. Drawing from the key findings, this contribution presents discussions, recommendations and conclusions.

Table 2: Themes and sub-themes

| Topics | Themes | Sub-themes |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Context and background | Key HIV/AIDS messages | Knowledge of HIV/AIDS Condom use HIV Counselling and Testing HIV treatment and management Stigma Gender equitable norms Voluntary medical male circumcision Sexual issues |
| | Implementation | People who implement HIV/AIDS awareness programmes Modes of delivering HIV/AIDS messages |
| Monitoring and evaluation | Reporting | Reporting period Outputs Output indicators Outcomes Outcomes indicators Monitoring and evaluation instruments/tools Type of evaluation conducted |
| | Institutional arrangement | Monitoring and evaluation personnel Data management system |

Context and background

All five NGOs use sport as a tool to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and other health issues in South Africa. The selected NGOs use interactive approaches that integrate sport to provide HIV/AIDS awareness programmes among the youth of both genders mainly between the ages of 9-24 years. NGO B also targets children under 9 years of age. The majority of recipients are attending school.

Key HIV/AIDS messages

The key HIV messages are cross-cutting, with HIV knowledge appearing to be the most common theme among all selected NGOs. Other HIV/AIDS messages focus on the following: condom use, promoting HIV Counselling and Testing, encouraging HIV/AIDS management and treatment including adherence to antiretroviral therapy, stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS, voluntary medical male circumcision, gender equitable norms, sexual issues, understanding your body, abstinence, relationships, sexual rights, gender-based violence, multiple sexual partners, delayed sexual debut, age-disparate sex, self-efficacy, reproductive health, teenage pregnancy, STIs, TB, appropriate time of disclosing HIV status, disclosing HIV status to a partner and positive living regardless of HIV status.

Implementation (also refer to Table 3)

The HIV/AIDS awareness sessions are either implemented by trained coordinators and coaches or peer educators/motivators during organised sport leagues, tournaments and weekly sport sessions. The duration varies per NGO; however, in most cases, half an hour is spent on actual sport and another half hour on HIV/AIDS awareness. Games: indigenous, recreational informal football, soccer, basketball, role plays/theatre and video clips appeared to be used mainly to deliver the HIV/AIDS messages, while other modes included poetry writing.

Monitoring and evaluation (also refer to Table 3)

All selected NGOs conduct reporting on their sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. However, descriptive information and outputs are more recorded rather than information about actual outcomes occurred as a result of the sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes of the selected NGOs.

Reporting period

The period of reporting varies per NGO. Reports are mostly a collaborative responsibility of the coordinators and programme managers. Only NGO C and NGO E write their reports in collaboration with individuals responsible for monitoring and evaluation in their organisations.

Outputs, outcomes and indicators

The reports are mostly output-based and only NGO C reports on both outputs and outcomes. The reports are commonly used for submission to funders, monitoring, identifying gaps and challenges, improving programmes and

financial tracking among all five NGOs (Maleka, 2015). Registers are the most common tool used to collect data/information in all NGOs. Some anticipated outcomes appeared to have insufficient information about various changes that the NGOs desired to make and some were not practical to measure.

Monitoring and evaluation instruments/tools

Programme description, logic/change model and log-frame are the most common tools mentioned by NGOs as being used for monitoring and evaluation. However, this study indicates that irrespective of having such tools, it is still a challenge for selected NGOs to conduct result-based monitoring and evaluation.

Types of evaluation conducted

Although one NGO displayed a strong monitoring and evaluation culture, conducting ongoing process and informative evaluation appeared to be very common and strong rather than measuring outcomes and impacts in other four NGOs.

Institutional arrangement

Institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation are not yet effective, and only NGO C and NGO E reported having monitoring and evaluation personnel.

“Monitoring and evaluation is usually added to the responsibilities of coordinators and coaches who are also involved in the implementation and this compromises the quality and integrity of the data/information collected” (NGO A coordinator).

Data management system

All NGOs use paper-based, electronic, external drives and Google Drives to capture, store and share information. In addition, NGOs A, C and E have on-line data management systems.

Table 3: Summary of key results

| Sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes of five selected NGOs | Implementation | | | | | | Monitoring and evaluation | | | | |
|---|--|-------|--------|--------------------|-------------|----------------------------|--|---------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| | Implementers | Games | Soccer | Role plays/theatre | Video clips | Other | Reporting period | Outputs | Output indicators | Anticipated Outcomes | Outcome indicators |
| A | Coaches Peer educators | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Not applicable | Yes: monthly, quarterly, mid-year, annual & biannual | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| B | Sport coordinator Coordinator Peer educators | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Not applicable | Yes: monthly & annual | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| C | Coaches | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Not applicable | Yes: quarterly & annual | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| D | Coaches | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Basketball, Writing poetry | Yes: monthly | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| E | Peer motivators Community mobilisers | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Writing poetry | Yes: monthly & annual | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |

Table 3 (continued): Summary of key results

| Sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes of five selected NGOs | Monitoring and evaluation Instruments used for monitoring and evaluation | | | | Monitoring and evaluation Types of evaluation conducted | | | | Monitoring and evaluation Institutional arrangement | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|---|--|------------------------|
| | Logframe/chan-ge model | Logframe/Planning methodology | Programme description | Other | Informative | Formative | Ongoing processes | Outcome-based | Impact | M&E personnel | Data management system |
| A | Yes | Yes | Yes | Not applicable | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| B | Yes | No | Yes | Not applicable | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| C | Yes | Yes | Yes | Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes: (M&E Director & Intern) | Yes |
| D | No | Yes | Yes | Master document/ log-sheets | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| E | Yes | Yes | Yes | Not applicable | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes but not yet | Yes done by external evaluators | Yes: Senior Manager: Monitoring Manager: Senior Evaluation | Yes |

Emerging themes from key-informants' interviews and focus group discussion

Challenges regarding data collection and reporting, lack of funding and recognition of sport as a medium of social change appeared to be the most common themes emerging among all participants.

Challenges

Challenges regarding data collection, analysis and reporting were of concern among NGOs. Majority of participants stated that data is sometimes missing and some information on indicators is not recorded correctly in monitoring tools. The implementation process seems to be regarded as more important than data information required for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

“Some programme managers to coaches do not take reporting seriously ...sometimes reports are incomplete with inadequate information on disaggregation ...sometimes they do not know how to use information obtained from routine monitoring at a capacity level” (NGO C M&E director).

“We are scared to challenge people and say today I do not want to collect data but I want to sit this week and carefully look, analyse and understand the data” (NGO A programme manager).

“At times we are scared to acknowledge gaps and only focus on positives...and also scared to spent sufficient time analysing and understanding data” (NGO E coordinator).

Funding and recognition of sport as a medium of change

Lack of financial support and restriction from funders to conduct monitoring and evaluation appeared to be common among all NGOs. In addition, the participants felt that there is lack in recognising sport as a medium of change from government and the private sector.

“The key challenge is a lack of financial support and resources to conduct continuous assessments of our programmes...there is limited funding to employ a designated person to perform M&E responsibilities only. Sometimes the NGO is funded by different funders/donors with different reporting requirements and thus compromise the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation” (NGO D director).

“Lack of a coordinated approach at a policy level in using sport to address HIV/AIDS and other social issues thus compromise the quality of programmes”
“... another challenge is buy-in from government and private sector in recognising sport as a medium of change and restrict continuity and

sustainability of sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes” (NGO A programme manager).

Discussion

Results revealed that the sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes of the selected NGOs focus on similar HIV prevention messages linked to the key priorities highlighted in the National Strategic Plan for HIV, STIs and TB of South Africa (2011). These included addressing sexual, behavioural, structural and biological determinants of HIV/AIDS (National Strategic Plan, 2011). Similarly to the findings of *Kicking AIDS Out* (2010), Kaufman et al. (2013) and Langer (2015) this study indicates that evaluating outcomes and impact of sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes of the selected NGOs remains a challenge. Monitoring and evaluation functions are not yet effective due to various challenges such as limited resources, human capacity and skills to perform monitoring and evaluation. In addition, proper planning, frameworks and systems on monitoring and evaluation restrict the ability of selected NGOs to measure desired outcomes of their sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. It is well documented in the literature that the majority of development programmes rely on funding, which at times restricts the quality of monitoring and evaluation (Levermore, 2011), as observed in this study. The United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace encourages governments to ensure adequate financial resources to strengthen monitoring and evaluation, including interdisciplinary research to provide scientific evidence and best practices of sport-based interventions (UNOSDP, 2013).

Although the selected NGOs were able to articulate anticipated outcomes of their sport based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes, only one (NGO C) has measurement indicators in place and has proven to have substantial documents and reports on monitoring and evaluation. Challenges to the evaluation of outcomes have been observed among sport for development programmes, including those focusing on HIV prevention (Langer, 2015). All initiatives aimed at responding to HIV/AIDS should focus on well-formulated objectives and should integrate indicators into their monitoring and evaluation activities in order to be able to measure the progress of their responses to HIV/AIDS (National Strategic Plan, 2011; UNAIDS, 2015).

The recognition of sport as an enabler for development requires governments to mainstream sport in policy-making at all levels as a contribution to the achievement of the SDGs. Moreover, a collaborative approach is important to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of sport for development programmes (UNOSDP, 2013; Dunn, 2015).

Recommendations

Although this study is limited to the sport and development field with reference to HIV/AIDS, the following recommendations can be explored for monitoring and evaluation of other development initiatives:

The United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace and governments of member countries should provide guidelines on monitoring and evaluation frameworks for sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. There is a need for training modules that are specifically tailored to build monitoring and evaluation capacity for NGOs, including M&E systems.

Funders and governments need to review their funding policies in order to allow an opportunity for donor/government-funded NGOs to establish in-house monitoring and evaluation systems, M&E functions and proper information management systems.

Platforms for sharing of information and practices regarding implementation, monitoring and evaluation of HIV/AIDS activities should be encouraged among sport for development of NGOs and other-health based organisations. This will provide an opportunity for learning and sharing and to promote best practices in the field of HIV/AIDS.

Conclusion

Capacity building of monitoring and evaluation is required to support the NGOs in being able to reflect accurate information on their sport-based HIV/AIDS activities and improve the M&E of their programmes. The study revealed that the sport-based HIV/AIDS awareness programmes of the selected NGOs are contributing to the responses to the HIV/AIDS challenges. However, monitoring and evaluation of such programmes are mostly output driven, rather than reporting on the information about the actual outcomes. Lack of monitoring and evaluation functions, as well as outcomes indicators, are critical elements limiting the selected NGOs in demonstrating the outcomes of these HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. It is critical that NGOs play an active, if not leading role in the process of strengthening their monitoring and evaluation systems. A collaborative approach from governments, funders, academics, researchers, international organisations/partners, civil society and communities is of significance in order to address the gaps and provide constructive support regarding monitoring and evaluation of development programmes provided by NGOs.

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