
Changing the game — can a sport-based youth development programme generate a positive social return on investment?

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Abstract

This study examines a sport for development and peace intervention initiated by grassroots Soccer South Africa that promotes youth employability and leadership. A results-based management approach and a social return on investment methodology were used to track the young people during and after the intervention. Preliminary results offer encouraging evidence of progress into employment, education and training with positive social returns for the youth and external stakeholders, suggesting that this investment is cost-effective and impactful. The results indicate that structured sport-based programmes can put young people to work and get them to study in a constructive manner, thereby stimulating economic growth and development. It is concluded that initiatives using sport to promote youth work merit greater investment, recognition and research.

Introduction

Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) refers to the use of sport to promote varied outcomes beyond the playing field and is defined by the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDPIWG) as the intentional use of sport, physical activity and play to attain specific development objectives in low- and middle-income countries and disadvantaged communities in high-income settings (SDPIWG 2008). SDP stakeholders working in the field and launching various initiatives over the past two decades include the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the public and the private sectors and civil society.

The 21st century saw the incorporation of sport into the mainstream development sector. Sport was widely hailed as a means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations (UN) (United Nations 2003b). The UN established its Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace in 2002 and passed Resolution 58/5 titled “Sport as a Means to Promote Education, Health, Development and Peace” in 2003 (United Nations 2003a). At the First International Conference on Sport and Development held in Magglingen in 2003, international agencies and states signed a declaration affirming their commitment to SDP. The year 2005 was declared the International Year of Sport and Physical Education, and from 2014, April 6 has been celebrated as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace. In a document issued by the UN (United Nations 2015),

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