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## Sport and peace

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### Abstract

Sport as a common powerful tool to promote peace, tolerance and understanding by bringing people together beyond boundaries, cultures and religions. Sport is the most unifying and inspiring development and peace tool in the world. No other social activity brings people together in such great numbers, and with so much passion and enjoyment. This conviction has since been reinforced by the work. The contribution of sports can make towards peace-building creations has generally been considered at the grassroots, state and nation levels.

**Keywords:** Sports, peace

### Introduction

#### Sport and Peace

Sport as a common powerful tool to promote peace, tolerance and understanding by bringing people together beyond boundaries, cultures and religions. Its natural values such as teamwork, fairness, discipline, respect for the opponent and the rules of the game are understood all over the world and can be apply in the advancement of harmony, social attachment and peaceful coexistence.

Sport programmes permit confrontation on neutral zone and in an environment where aggression can be controlled, regulated and transformed and hence facilitates friendship and harmony between opposing parties.

Programmes and specialized agencies use sport programmes to achieve their objectives. In post-conflict situations, sport programmes are consistently used.

Although sport alone cannot stop or solve an intense clash or conflict, it represents a flexible and cost-effective medium for post-conflict relief work and peace building as well as conflict prevention.

#### Sport For Peace Project Examples

UN peacekeeping operations:

Côte d'Ivoire In June 2009, a football tournament was organized by the UN peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), bringing together the armed forces of the rebel-led FAFN and the government-led FDS to promote reconciliation and unity.

Liberia In 2007, the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the IOC and UNOSDP teamed up to implement the country-wide "Sport for Peace" programme with the goal of fostering peace in the aftermath of the civil war and to educating youth about HIV/AIDS issues.

Democratic Republic of the Congo to promote the reconciliation process, the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), the IOC and UNOSDP partnered in 2006 to organize the two-week long "Jeux de la Paix" (Peace Games), which included a variety of sports competitions and brought together youth from all parts of the country. Read more about Sport for Peace activities in field missions led by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

In September 1991, Moldavia was hit by floods that killed hundreds of people. American Football team were about to travel to Romania for a European Cup match against Bacău. On learning of the disaster, they decided to charter a truck with relief and medical supplies. Football helped to bring a glimmer of hope to the people affected by the flooding.

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Sport is the most unifying and inspiring development and peace tool in the world. No other social activity brings people together in such great numbers, and with so much passion and enjoyment. This conviction has since been reinforced by the work.

- Sport is enjoyed by all regardless of age, gender or race. Its reach is ultimate.
- Sport promotes universal values that transform language and culture.
- By playing together, young people intentionally learn the universal values of respect, tolerance and fair play. It was a victory for sport.

The UN general assembly adopted a resolution establishing 6 April as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace in August 2013. The day inspire people to participate in sport, and aims to raise information about sport's potential as a development tool, and promote grassroots projects and organisations.

It is now essential for this to be transmitted into response. Union between governments, NGOs, Sports Federations – need to be build up, with more projects execute on the ground.

### **The role of sport in peacebuilding**

The contribution of sports can make towards peace-building creations has generally been considered at the grassroots, state and nation levels.

At the grassroots or community level, sport provide a useful way of build an environment in which people can come together to:

- Work towards the same destination,
- Show respect for others and
- Share space and equipment.

All these conditions are necessary for peace-building movement and represent findings from a Peace Players International programme.

In South Africa, the program 'bridging divides' uses basketball to bring children and communities together. The majority of participants expressed fewer racial stereotypes and less racism compared to children who were not part of the program. Many participants were in favour of racial integration and further inter-racial socialisation than other children.

Many studies on the role of sport in encouraging social integration among different traditional groups in South African schools confirmed 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 transform class divisions.

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.

### **Practical considerations of using sport in peace building**

Sport programs focussing to contribute peace-building must take a number of aspects into account in the planning and/or implementing phases:

#### **Sport as part of a holistic approach to peacebuilding**

Sport programs focus on peace-building must ensure:

- that their efforts are part of a wider holistic approach
- to peace-building and
- conflict transformation.

It is endorsed that sport programs in conflict and post-conflict situations are carry out as part of complete peace-building strategies.

#### **Sensitivity**

Sport is treated as a social build up i.e. socio-cultural norms and values directed the ways in which sport and physical activity is observed and is carried out in a community.

Programs of sports 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 program, which should aim to be as inclusive as possible.

Efforts must be made to assure that:

- all groups have approach the infrastructure, including access to play spaces, equipment, and transportation
- and from the play areas.
- Sports program must be propely timed and expected to cater to the target group.
- Sports programs should be welcoming, attainable 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 program that aims to contribute effectively to peace-building.

#### **Barriers to interaction**

Sport programs 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.

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