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A CONCEPT NOTE ON USING SPORT AS A SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT TOOL**H.M.S.B. Herath**

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Abstract: Sport, has become a "Human Right" and an "important enabler of sustainable development" as recognized in the United Nations Declaration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Thus, sport would continue to be an increasingly cost effective and resourceful tool readily available to those who understand the power and flexibility of sport for its ability to address each of the 17 sustainable development goals in unique and enjoyable ways. The mission of the Ministry of Social Empowerment, Welfare and Kandy Heritage is "to formulate and implement policies and strategies and deliver results in creative and innovative ways to provide people friendly social and economic services

to marginalized and disadvantaged people through institutions, networks and professionals in effective, efficient, speedy and productive manner to enhance their quality of life in collaboration with local and global agencies." This concept paper will support the Ministry to think of sport in an innovative way to develop the lives of its beneficiaries. Thus, the aim of this paper is to provide awareness to the reader about the broad use of sport as an effective social development tool.

Key Words: Development, Development through Sport

BACKGROUND OF THE CONCEPT

A discussion on using sport for the development of Sri Lanka could be a relatively new concept to many people. However, sport was used internationally as a method of social development since 1920s (Coakley, 2011; Coalter, 2010; Giulianotti, 2011; Kidd, 2008). Wilfried Lemke, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace said, "Sport has a crucial role to play in the efforts of the United Nations to improve the lives of people around the world. Sport builds bridges between individuals and across communities, providing a fertile ground for sowing the seeds of development and peace" (sportanddev.org, 2017). In addition, Ban Ki-moon also mentioned, "sport is increasingly recognized as an important tool in helping the United Nations achieve its objectives, in particular the Millennium Development Goals. By including sport in development and peace programmes in a more systematic way, the United Nations can make full use of this cost-efficient tool to help us create a better world." (ibid.). Even after the United Nations (UN) have started working on sustainable development goals the UN hardly stopped believing in the power of sport a tool of social development. Thus, it is timely relevant to discuss in brief the use of sport as a development tool to provide the motivation to Sri Lankan government sector especially the Ministry of Social Empowerment, Welfare and Kandyan Heritage in including sport with a broader view to activate their strategic development plans.

Definition of the Sport

The use of sport as a method of bringing social development should be discussed after understanding the definition of sport and the development. According to the United Nations Inter-agency Taskforce on Sport for Development and Peace, sport is known as all forms of physical activity such as play, recreation, organised, casual or competitive sport and indigenous sports or games that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction.

Method Used in Developing the Concept Paper

The aim of this paper was to provide awareness to the reader about the broad use of sport as an effective social development tool. International literature on social development through sport was used to strengthen the concept note. In addition, social development is a broader concept as described by the United Nations Inter-agency Taskforce on Sport for Development and Peace. This organisation believes that development includes individual development, health promotion and disease prevention, gender equality, social integration and social capital development, peace development and conflict resolution, relief from post-disaster trauma and normalisation of daily life, economic development and communication and social services. However, the definition of the development is decided based on the perspectives of the individuals of a community. Therefore, a qualitative approach was used in this paper to understand the given definition for the development by the staff at the Ministry of Social Empowerment, Welfare and Kandyan Heritage in laying the foundation of this concept note.

Thus, 10 definitions on the concept of development, which were provided by randomly selected respondents (05 male office-workers and 05 female office-workers) were analysed in *word cloud* to understand the definition of development in the field of social development and social work. QDA

MINER LITE version 2.0.2 was used to analyse the definitions under several coding such as: individual development, health promotion, gender equality, social integration, peace development, relief from post-disaster trauma and normalisation of daily life, economic development and communication and social services. These coding were constructed based on the explanation given by the United Nations Inter-agency Taskforce on Sport for Development and Peace on the concept of *development*.



Figure 1: Word Cloud Analysis on the Definition of Development
Source: Interview Data, 2018

According to the Figure 1, it is shown that majority of the participants who provided a definition for development have seen development as either individual development, health promotion or economic development. In addition, they have viewed development as ensuring gender equality of a society, social integration and peace development. It can be hardly seen that the respondents viewed development as having relief from post-disaster trauma. Normal daily lives, better communication and social services. Hence, it can be assumed that the development is any kind of individual development, health promotion or economic development or ensuring gender equality of a society and improving social integration and peace development.

Thus, this small analysis provide an insight for the professionals of the social development sector to be concerned of the facts that a society views as 'development' and then to prepare sport oriented strategies to achieve those developments, which are identified by a society as their development need.

Sport as a Social Development Tool

Lyras (2007) suggests that sport initiatives can facilitate personal development and social change by embracing non-traditional sport management practices through an interdisciplinary framework, blending sport with cultural enrichment (the mix of sport with cultural and educational activities). Using sport as a tool of social change was widely spread after the year 2005 (Levermore&Beacom, 2009) with the announcement of identifying 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education by the United Nations. Then many activists launched number of social rehabilitation projects and social education projects such as promoting the inclusion of differently abled people in social activities through sport, providing health education through sport and teaching social values through sport. i.e. Football for Life is a programme supported by UNICEF in Honduras. The programme promotes HIV/AIDS prevention and strives to protect young people from sexual

exploitation. Older adolescents volunteer as role models for younger football players, and a weekly match is accompanied by discussion about HIV/AIDS (Koss and Alexandrova, 2005).

Right To Play is another organisation that conducts HIV/AIDS awareness programmes in some countries. In rural Mozambique, for example, the international organisation works to increase HIV/AIDS awareness. It trains local coaches to serve as role models for children and young people and aims to reach the most remote communities with correct information and prevention messages (Koss and Alexandrova, 2005). By using traditional games, children in Mozambique readily learn the myths and facts about the epidemic, and convey this information to others. Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) in Kenya, also works on health related issues, including HIV/AIDS prevention. MYSA organise sport events where young people learn about HIV/AIDS during breaks. MYSA also holds gender forums, where boys and girls, guided by coaches, discuss issues related to HIV/AIDS and its prevention (ibid.). The organisation also focuses on enhancing individual development and encouraging the social capital. The Street Football Organisation has identified sport as a universal language. This organisation uses football to bring development in eight areas such as employability, education, social integration, peace building, gender equality, health, youth leadership and environment (Street football world, 2018).

Above mentioned examples are several evidences to encourage the government sector of Sri Lanka to facilitate policy decisions in promoting sport as a tool of social development. However, it can be seen that organisations in Sri Lanka such as Sri Lanka Unites, Foundation of Goodness and UN Volunteers Sri Lanka are using sport in several ways to support the development of the Sri Lankan society (Peiris, 2018). Thus, if sport related development interventions can be supported further by the government sector of Sri Lanka many sport related development interventions can be effectively practiced such as conflict resolution, cultural understanding, physical, social, sport and community infrastructure development, awareness through education, empowerment of marginalised groups, encouragement of physical activity, emotional health and welfare, driving economic development and poverty alleviation (Lever more, 2008).

Koss and Alexandrova (2005) also state, "what seems to be missing from the current discourse is the general commitment of national governments to give sport and play a chance as actors in development. Furthermore, an overall acceptance of a comprehensive definition of sport, which is not limited to the elite sports, but encompasses all forms of physical activity, is needed. The definition should be built on the values of inclusion, respect for your opponents, and fair play. In some countries, already scarce government resources dedicated for sport are spent entirely on the elite sports, which are open to few and do not directly benefit many. In other countries, sport for all is regarded as a luxury. Only a handful of developed countries, such as Canada, Holland, USA, Norway, and Switzerland, actually use sport in their foreign-assistance policies, and provide targeted funding to a handful of sport-based initiatives. Despite the international consensus of their importance for child and community development, sport and play programmes often remain on the margins of governmental support and attention. To sustain the available efforts, and to give the most disadvantaged children a sporting chance, support from national governments is crucial. Inclusion of sport as a method for development in the national programmes and policies is key to ensure the lasting legacy of current development efforts. "This aim should be achieved by meeting several objectives such as: building strong links between sport and achievement of the Sustainable

Development Goals, converting existing best practices from the field into policy and establishing partnerships between national governments, civil society actors, and the United Nations need to be built in sport and development (Koss and Alexandrova, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Referred literature provided awareness to the readers on how sport can contribute the social development of a country. If the development in Sri Lanka referred to as any kind of individual development, health promotion or economic development or ensuring gender equality of a society and improving social integration and peace development, sport can be used as an effective tool by the Ministry of Social Empowerment, Welfare and Kandyan Heritage as sport is a universal language to address any kind of social issue.

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