

**Expert Group Meeting and Interagency Dialogue on “Strengthening the Global
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I. Sport in development and peace work

Recognition of sport as a suitable strategy to support social development processes has in recent years led to an intensification of sport for development and peace (SDP) activity. This has taken place through a variety of strategic alliances, partnerships, programs and interventions encompassing a wide array of institutions including community based-organizations, sport federations, national governments, academic institutions, transnational organizations, international development agencies and the private sector. These stakeholders are supportive of the idea that sport possesses unique attributes that allow it to advance specific social goals, including, most notably, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Among the unique qualities recognized in sport as a peace and development vehicle, there are: **the universality of sport**. Sport brings people together serving as a common denominator across cultures. At the same time, the enormous appeal of sport can support social interventions as it provides a hook to bring together multiple stakeholders and at-risk populations into community welfare programs where a variety of social services can be delivered. Sport is by definition an **outstanding communication platform** which can generate unparalleled enthusiasm and actively mobilize large amounts of people to act in favor of a particular social cause. An additional attribute of sport, according to the SDP International Working Group (2008), is its capacity to **connect peoples and communities effectively**. When they are inclusive, communities turn into important areas of social networking fostering a capacity to work in a cooperative manner. Sport has the ability to **inspire and motivate** participants, potentially encouraging their self-esteem, and facilitating the development of positive connections (see Coalter and Taylor, 2010). Furthermore, as stated by UNICEF (2005), sport can contribute to personal and community development as sport **promotes mental and physical well-being**. The regular practice of sport and physical activity leads to healthy lifestyles. Sport is also an **educational tool**, serving as a school of life where a series of positive values and attitudes can be learned and applied.

II. Thematic area

Exploring the evidence of sport’s contribution to building and sustaining peace

While sport in itself is not a primary vehicle for peace building, there have been many examples, as Woodhouse (2010a) reminds us, where sport has been seen as a bridge-building activity and an alternative to destructive conflict and violence (pp. 493-494). In peace building efforts, the energy and enthusiasm derived from sport can provide an ideal resource which can

constructively assist communities in promoting positive social transformation and fostering peace.

Scholars and SDP advocates have both concluded that, when properly managed and articulated, sport can play a constructive peace building role in communities affected by conflict and division (see Guilianotti & Armstrong, 2011; Sugden 1991; Woodhouse, 2010a; SDP IWG, 2008; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2005). Sport-based interventions have emerged as useful tools to support peace-building efforts in highly volatile contexts, due to, for instance, the ability of sport to maintain open channels of communication in hostile environments (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2005), and its capacity to connect people and develop networks of cooperation (SDP IWG, 2008). These characteristics found in sport can potentially contribute to reframing social relations between communities and groups that have been disrupted due to conflict (Rubenstein, 2011).

In academic literature, evidence of the potential of sport to contribute to processes of peace building stems from three main sources: 1) from the application of existing peace building and conflict resolution approaches to the sports field, 2) from the exploration of the role of sport as a tool for advancing peace at the international, national, intercommunal and individual level, and 3) from case studies (involving diverse geographical regions, themes, organizations, etc.).

Available research in the area of sport and peace has applied models of conflict transformation and peace building to the sports arena including Galtung's (1996) 3Rs (reconstruction, reconciliation, resolution) approach to conflict transformation, and Lederach's (1997) web-approach to peace building. The holistic process of peace building, according to Galtung integrates three key processes or 3 Rs: 1) **reconstruction** of peoples and places after violence, 2) **reconciliation** of the parties in conflict, and 3) **resolution** of animosities (8). The first step includes processes such as rehabilitation and rebuilding. Sport-based interventions have provided rehabilitation and healing through psycho-social programs, as in the case of Sri Lanka (e.g. program Cricket for Change) and Sierra Leone (see Van der Niet, 2010), while sport tournaments have been found to facilitate the building of relationships and the strengthening of inter/intra community ties (Kvalsund, 2005). In South Africa, a society which was divided by apartheid, both professional and recreational sports, according to Höglund and Sundberg (2008), have contributed to reconciliation at the national, communal and individual level (pp. 807-814). In resolution, sport has the capacity to provide a controlled environment in which participants can be taught about resolving conflict. The methodology Football for Peace (which introduced a series of innovative additions to traditional football games, e.g. participants set the rules of the game; there are no referees but mediators, etc.) has facilitated opportunities for dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflict via sport among at-risk youth in communities with high levels of violence and criminality in Colombia and beyond (Cárdenas, 2013).

Another useful peace building approach to examine the role of sport in peace is Lederach's (1997) **web-making approach** to peace building. This approach emphasizes the development of strategic networks (or web-making processes) which are of particular relevance to community-based organizations and NGOs. Web-making in sport-for-peace has been examined by Lea-

Howarth (2006) pointing out that sport has been fundamental in forming social networks that can be sustained over time among SDP stakeholders, and Cárdenas (2015), whose research on Colombia found that a network of sport-based social programs has been instrumental in shaping the government's perception of sport as a tool for national development.

The second area of evidence on the role of sport in peace building emerges from the examination of the role of sport as a tool for advancing peace at the individual, intercommunal, national and international levels. **At the individual level**, sport interventions can contribute to peace by empowering individuals as they obtain specific knowledge and skills. The program *A Ganar*, for example, conceived to combat youth unemployment in Latin America and the Caribbean, has helped thousands of youth acquire marketable job expertise using sport as a medium (Cárdenas, 2015, p. 278). **At the community level**, sport can support the process of peace building by bridging relationships across groups and communities that might otherwise have the propensity to treat each other with hostility and distrust (SDP IWG, 2008, p.207). In Northern Ireland, a society divided by sectarian interests, research by Sugden (1991) examined a football project that brought together youth from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds. The research concluded that sport interventions, under carefully qualified conditions, can foster a sense of tolerance and peaceful co-existence between clashing communities.

Sport has been employed to foster peace at the national level in societies experiencing high levels of violence and conflict. In areas undergoing post-conflict recovery such as Liberia and the Balkans, research by Guilianotti and Armstrong (2011) found that sport-based interventions present the military with an innovative way to engage more actively with ex-combatants, civil society and other key individuals and organizations promoting reconciliation at the national level. Moreover, Cárdenas and Lang (In press), identify key areas (positive encounters and trust-building; information; cross-cutting engagement; reconciliation; team building; construction and rehabilitation), in which military peace missions deployed in conflict-ridden countries can greatly benefit from the use of sport as a strategy to reach some of their primary goals. **At the international level**, sport has provided a platform so that countries experiencing political tensions can potentially open channels of communication and promote dialogue. This has been done through sport diplomacy initiatives, which have, in several cases, provided a stepping stone for countries to normalize diplomatic and political relations. In this regard, Stolyarov (2011) highlights the role of sport-diplomacy in the early 1970s when the USA reestablished diplomatic relations with China after decades of no official diplomatic contact partly thanks to a series of table tennis exchanges between the two nations (pp. 22–67).

Case studies provide an additional body of evidence in the examination of the nexus between sport and peace building. Case studies, which comprise much of the research on sport for development and peace, formulate a wide array of variables for examination (specific sports, children, women, etc.) and levels of analysis (local, regional, etc.) (Schnitzer et al.,2012, p.597). With this in mind, the next section introduces a case study on Colombia and Northern Ireland detailing the use of sport as a means to contribute to peace building efforts in both societies affected by conflict and war.

III. Research on Peace Building in Conflict Zones: Colombia and Northern Ireland

Doctoral research was conducted (Cárdenas, 2015) with the aim of delving into the use of recreational sport to advance peace-building in both Colombia and Northern Ireland within the conflict context of both regions, and as seen through the lenses of the personnel involved in designing, implementing and supporting SDP programs (SDP officials). This study also examined the SDP sector of both regions, looked into key programs, interventions and methodologies, and reviewed relevant policy on this front. Lessons were drawn from Colombia and Northern Ireland which could be of interest to other divided societies and the global SDP sector.

Research findings

The role of sport amid conflict

In Northern Ireland, SDP officials' perspectives with regard to the role of football and other sports within this region's unique (post) conflict setting, gravitated consistently around two fundamental issues (in order of importance): a) **fostering contact among Protestants and Catholics** and, b) **promoting intercultural awareness and understanding**. Using popular sport practices to promote contact across the divide is partially associated with the idea that interaction between individuals from opposing groups can lead to significantly decreased prejudice when certain conditions are met. This approach is known as the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), and has been one of the guiding principles of various Northern Irish SDP programs and interventions. Further, given the segregated school system (Cairns & Hewstone, 2002) and housing scheme (Housing Executive, n.d.), sport-based programs and interventions have had a positive effect on increasing intercultural awareness across the divide.

In Colombia, sport was found to be useful in partially tackling a wide array of issues related to the conflict including: 1) **providing a safe space** for at-risk children and youth; 2) **teaching abilities and skills** that would allow them to make proper decisions if (or when) they face recruitment by illegal armed forces (or criminal networks); 3) **helping youth build a life plan**; 4) **creating jobs** and related economic opportunities; 5) **fostering peaceful coexistence** and tackling urban violence; and, 6) **promoting social inclusion**.

The limitations of sport as a peace tool

Several drawbacks were identified in the use of sport as a social cohesion tool: a) the lack of motivation in sport by some program beneficiaries, and the exclusion of girls in sport activities; b) the competitive nature of sport; c) the lack of awareness about the social role of sport which may lead to insufficient support to SDP initiatives; d) the association between sport and sectarian

division in the case of Northern Ireland; ¹ and, e) the lack of proper sport facilities, as reported in Colombia. Notwithstanding the role that sport has played in fostering a peace culture in Colombia and Northern Ireland, there is no indication that sport by itself could address structural violence or the causes of the conflict in either case.

The role of SDP officials as peacemakers and drivers of change

Data gathered through interviews and observations suggest that SDP officials in Colombia and Northern Ireland were to some degree mindful of their role as peacemakers and drivers of community change. Moreover, SDP officials believe they have made a contribution to the creation of a culture of peace in both regions.

The Sport for Development and Peace Sector

In contrast to Northern Ireland, web-making among SDP officials in Colombia has greatly energized this field. Joint work through networks of cooperation among SDP officials and organizations have not only allowed these to create a greater impact on the communities where they operate, but most importantly, web-making has helped in raising greater awareness among governmental agencies on the importance of supporting sport-based social interventions. In Northern Ireland, as opposed to Colombia, the SDP sector is participated by a wider array of local stakeholders with a particularly critical engagement of academic institutions and sport federations.

Conclusions

- Sport-based peace-building interventions and programs have made a modest, yet tangible contribution to building peace in these societies affected by division and conflict. Although sport has proven valuable in supporting peace efforts in Colombia and Northern Ireland, sport's role in peace work is limited, and therefore, it should not be propagated as an integral peace building strategy.
- In Northern Ireland, recreational sport has promoted peace by providing a platform to encourage contact between youth and adults from clashing communities, with the hope that meaningful relations can be created and sustained across the divide.
- In Colombia, sport-based interventions and programs have contributed to peace-building by welcoming those at the margins of society into a space where vulnerable populations can play safely, and where they can, to some extent, develop a life plan for themselves.

¹ The separation between Protestants and Catholics is also reflected in the sport arena. Though there are many exceptions to this rule, broadly speaking, sport in Northern Ireland is usually expressed in terms of cultural identity. In this sense, sports like cricket and hockey are widely popular among the Protestant community, while Gaelic games are practiced almost exclusively by Catholics

- Following the Northern Irish case, it is strongly advised that SDP officials in divided societies be aware of any underlying cultural or political issues attached to sport when employing it as a social cohesion tool. In Northern Ireland, it is necessary to raise awareness on the social role of sport among governmental agencies, embed programs within larger national development schemes, and develop concrete policy on SDP within a shared future context.

IV. Exploring the evidence of sport's contribution to sustainable development

SDP programs and interventions working within the conflict context of Colombia and Northern Ireland, have made a visible contribution to building peace in both regions, while at the same time addressing larger development goals including some of the SDGs.

Example: In Colombia (the same is true in other developing nations), sport continues to be an ideal medium to bring at-risk populations into social interventions with the aim of delivering a variety of social services which are oftentimes inaccessible to program beneficiaries due to poverty, corruption and armed conflict. Development goals commonly addressed by SDP programs via sport in Colombia, as well as through complementary strategies (e.g. seminars, workshops, various cultural, pedagogical and awareness-raising activities, etc.) include the promotion of healthy habits (**SDG 3**),² and quality education (**SDG 4**),³ empowerment of women and girls (**SDG 5**),⁴ access to decent work (**SDG 8**),⁵ and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies (**SDG 16**).

Recommendation: For sport to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and the 2030 agenda, sport needs to be incorporated within national development strategies and action plans (especially in the developing world). Two processes can significantly support this. At the international level, intergovernmental organizations (e.g. Commonwealth) and expert groups on SDP can support governments in policy development and implementation. At the local and regional level, producing solid evidence of the results achieved by SDP NGOs in tackling social problems via sport (through evaluative research and program evaluation) can inform national authorities and policymakers, in the best case, catapulting sport as a viable development tool, and consequently, influencing social policy on sport.

² The NGO Fútbol con Corazón provides children and adolescents in vulnerable communities with a number of opportunities aimed at educating its beneficiaries on nutrition and other health issues along with sports trainings.

³ Most SDP programs participating in this study incorporate a strong educational component aimed at supplementing formal education received by program beneficiaries in schools.

⁴ The methodology Football for Peace –implemented widely across SDP NGOs –and its variations like Golombiao, a governmental program, use sport to promote gender balance and the empowerment of women.

⁵ The program *A Ganar* use sport to teach youth skills so that they can increase their chances of getting a job.

V. Effective mainstreaming of sport in development programs and policies

The Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDP IWG) suggests that once there is sufficient awareness on the social dimension of sport, the natural step is for governments to develop policy. Two approaches to achieve this are suggested: 1) establishing a distinct national SDP policy and related programs and legislation, and/or 2) integrating SDP into existing national and international development and sport policies (2008, p.21).

Example: In Colombia, key documents have situated sport as a transversal strategy running through key areas such as child protection, urban planning, health, education, culture and international relations. Acknowledgment of the social dimension of sport could potentially lead to the creation of public policy on sport as a development and peace tool. In Northern Ireland, by contrast, as reported by practitioners and as examined in key documents, greater commitment by governmental agencies and the creation of clear public policy on sport and peace within the “shared future” context⁶ is still required.

Recommendation: In order to continuously support nations to develop policy as they increase their awareness on the social role of sport, regional and global cooperation on this front acquires greater importance. Intergovernmental organizations, regional institutions and national governments with experience in SDP policy, (e.g. Commonwealth; EU; Norway) can cooperate with their regional counterparts (Organization of American States, African Union, etc.), and national governments, that seek to incorporate SDP within their national and regional development strategies.

VI. Effective resource mobilization for leveraging sport for development and peace

Resource mobilization can take the form of financial, logistical and technical support, as well as knowledge transfer and capacity building, all of which help to advance the mission of organizations in the SDP field.

Example: In Northern Ireland, with the assistance of the European Union to help “embed the peace process”, £1.5 billion have been channeled to support interventions designed to improve relations within and between communities (International Conflict Research Institute - INCORE, 2010). In Colombia, as the international community turns its eyes and resources on this country’s post-conflict era, material resources and technical support are being channeled to support post-conflict programs, which can constitute an important financing source for local SDP programs. In addition, technical support and capacity building has taken place via international cooperation schemes in Colombia. The GIZ (German Development Agency) for instance, has provided technical support for several NGOs via training of personnel, review and strengthening of methodologies and monitoring and evaluation of activities.

⁶ Shared future refers to a comprehensive set of strategies and policies aimed at establishing a united society in Northern Ireland.

Resource mobilization in SDP also entails the sharing of information, the promotion of collaborative work, the exchange of ideas, and the generation of tools and practical actions aimed at facilitating the work and mission of SDP stakeholders. In this sense, global SDP has been greatly boosted by initiatives such as Sportanddev (<https://www.sportanddev.org>), a virtual tool, repository of information and networking platform on sport for development. Nevertheless, because of language barriers (this resource is only available in English, and more recently in French) important information, relevant academic work and key documents, opportunities, news and resources on sport for development do not reach many potential beneficiaries and SDP stakeholders. As a consequence, there is a widening of the gap between global SDP and regions such as Latin America.

Recommendation: Developing the SDP sector at the national/regional level is key. This can take place through the active engagement of local stakeholders in actions aimed at supporting social development within the unique dynamics of particular regions with sport as a vehicle, as well as through the constant exchange of knowledge and experience between these regions and global SDP.

Action in Latin America: While conducting research on SDP in Colombia, I became aware of the fact that in a region like Latin America and the Caribbean -where sport has been employed as a social catalyst for over two decades- SDP does not exist as a consolidated sector yet. In order to contribute to resource mobilization in SDP in the region I have undertaken two recent initiatives:

- A virtual Platform on Sport for Development and Peace (<https://deportedesarrolloypaz.org>) whose goals are to spread information and opinions, promote initiatives, educate the Spanish-speaking public on SDP, and generate practical tools to support SDP stakeholders.
- Co-editing of a Special Issue on SDP in LAC (August 2018). The aim of this special issue for the Journal Sport for Development (JSFD) is to encourage critical discussions and encourage research on sport for development and peace in Latin America and the Caribbean.

VII. Monitoring and evaluation of programs and policies to leverage sport for development and peace

Though some organizations have implemented sound M&E schemes in both Colombia and Northern Ireland, this is not the case in most interventions. This is an area that needs considerable improvement as monitoring and evaluation is certainly one aspect of SDP programs that poses considerable challenges to program implementers and financiers. Reports, in many cases, are limited to narrating simple outputs while their objective should be to rationally analyze and assess the impact of SDP interventions and the possible ways in which programs could be improved.

Example: In Northern Ireland, programs such as Football for Peace and Peace Players International have worked conjunctly with universities and research centers in the UK (Brighton University; The Institute for Conflict Research) to monitor and evaluate their interventions. In Colombia and elsewhere, academic institutions can make a unique contribution to sport for development and peace programs by assisting NGOs, governmental agencies and international organizations in programs design, delivery, training and M&E.

Recommendation: Academic and research institutions may support this process by developing rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems in conjunction with NGOs and grassroots organizations. Ideally, M&E should be an inspiring, innovative and inclusive process that actively consults with, and incorporates, program implementers, communities and beneficiaries.

VIII. Exploring the evidence of sport's contribution to building and sustaining peace

In addition to the conclusions and evidence presented in the section on sport and peace building and the case study on Colombia and Northern Ireland, the following is recommended:

Additional recommendations:

- The momentum that sport may generate as an element of peace (e.g. by opening up channels of communication that have remained dormant due to conflict; by bringing clashing sides closer together; by generating international media attention) needs to be sustained with substantive political reform and concrete policy at the national/regional level.
- In post-conflict scenarios, the military can support efforts aimed at sustaining peace by actively engaging with communities via sport in order to “win the minds and hearts of the people”.
- The philosophy of the Olympic Truce can inspire and mobilize communities as they explore innovative approaches to build and sustain peace, especially in regions experiencing violence and unrest. Active collaboration between the IOC, on the one hand, and National Olympic Committees, governmental agencies, the international community, civil society and related peace-promoting institutions, on the other, in the form of practical sport-based and educational initiatives and awareness-raising activities on the peace building value of the Olympic Truce needs to be strengthened.
- Academic research in the area of SDP is still in its early stages and much remains to be done. In order to better understand the role of sport as a social catalyst, more studies should be grounded in peace and development approaches and theories.
- Sport should not be regarded as a holistic peace building strategy. Aware of the opportunities and limitations of sport in development and peace work, programs and interventions should operate within broader national and regional peace-building schemes in order to generate a broader impact and guarantee sustainability.

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