

## **SPORT FOR ALL IN THE THIRD WORLD – REALITY OR NOT?**

I will begin by analysing ‘Sport for All’ as a concept.

I have been asked today to talk to a title “Sport for All in the 3<sup>rd</sup> World – Reality or Not”. Let me at the outset, very briefly, present my premise and then my note of caution.

I believe in sport for all and the value of both physical education and sport in teaching much to us all; young and old. But let us not overstate what can be achieved by physical education and sport in the very, very troubled countries of the 3<sup>rd</sup> World. Political leaders of national governments and leaders of numerous supra national agencies have also identified and stressed the universal value of sport to resolve the problems of nation states the world over. In 2002 Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated his belief that

*“Sport can play a role in improving the lives of not only individuals, I might add, but whole communities. I am convinced that the time is right to build on that understanding, to encourage governments, development agencies and communities to think how sport can be included more systematically in the plans to help children, particularly those living in the midst of poverty, disease and conflict.”*

Olympic Roundtable Forum, Salt Lake City Olympic Games 2002

The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has similarly endorsed the importance of sport to address a variety of political agendas when he identified the Government’s new vision for sport in the UK.

*“It’s not just a sports policy. It’s a health policy, an education policy, an anti-crime policy and an anti-drugs policy.”*

Game Plan, 2002 – A Strategy for delivering the Government’s sport and physical activity objectives.

The rhetoric of these and other international leaders relating to the political role of sport in the domestic context may vary from a semantic perspective, but not significantly with respect to substance. In recent years the message has become more eloquently presented, more substantive and well supported by research evidence. But the message has a similar resonance to that presented over recent decades.

The Council of Europe first articulated the concept of *'Sport for All'* in the early 1970s, encouraging participation in sport for a number of supposed social, economic and covert political objectives. Supporting evidence to justify individual government funding of programmes to encourage increased participation in sport was limited, but the message remained clear. Even before this encouragement to support sport for all was being proclaimed across Western Europe, the USSR was advocating the mobilisation of the populations of the Eastern Bloc to become active participants in sport as part of their *'Massovost'* programme. This programme, by comparison, was overtly political, to support *'Labour and Defence'*; a programme to make the Soviet citizens fitter and stronger for work and defence of the 'Motherland'. Though the programme was subsequently discredited, after the collapse of communism, and the numbers involved proved to be grossly overstated, it had a clear political message, advocating mass participation for specific social, economic and political objectives.

In contemporary society the rationale for state support for sport for all is invariably common, almost regardless of a country's political persuasion or economic and social realities. The contrast lies more firmly in the availability of evidence to support the efforts to encourage ever greater involvement of the public in sport and physical exercise.

The various agendas presented by the British government that sport for all is considered to address and the research evidence proffered to justify action in this context is not unique to the UK. The difference is primarily in the detail of the statistics, not the argument.

The rationale presented by the British government to justify state support and intervention in sport has a clear and transparent political dimension. Sport is considered to have a key role in fulfilling specific social, economic and political agendas.

- Health and the growing problems of obesity, particularly among young people.
- Tackling anti-social behaviour and fear of crime.
- Raising educational standards.

- Developing more cohesive and sustainable communities.
- Tackling disadvantage.
- Ensuring young people get the best possible start in life.
- Economic vitality and workforce development.

Research evidence to justify action in the realms of sport, specifically sport for all is cited in a number of government reports. The chief Medical Officer in the Department of Health has argued that

***“The scientific evidence is compelling. Physical activity not only contributes to well being, but is also essential for good general health. People (in Britain) who are physically active reduce the risk of developing major chronic diseases by up to 50%, and the risk of premature death by about 20-30%.”***

Department of Health 2004

The same report presents compelling evidence to support the argument that regular participation in sport can help to tackle obesity, the curse of the economically advanced societies. A major outcome of obesity is diabetes. A report published by the World Health Organisation in early October 2005 claimed that deaths from diabetes were set to increase by 25% over the next decade. A leading British expert on the disease, Professor George Alberti, commented

***“This is one of the biggest health catastrophes the world has ever seen. The financial and social burden will be intolerable.”***

The number of people worldwide affected by diabetes has risen from 55 million in 1955 to 150 million in 2005. Every year, 5 million of them die. By 2025 the number of sufferers is expected to rise to 300 million, driven by rising levels of obesity and inactivity. In the UK, 5% of the Health budget is spent on treating diabetes. The real cost of physical inactivity is estimated to be £8.2 billion. There is a clear economic benefit to government of fostering a more physically active society.

The other positive outcomes of a more active society could be cited in some detail, but here is not the time or place. Suffice it to present comments of other reports that have influenced, guided and dictated government intervention in sport in Britain.

***“Sport can be a powerful tool to engage all sections of the community and break down barriers between them. (It) can be used as a means of bringing people together from different communities to share positive experiences and gain greater understanding of each other’s ways of life.”***

Community Cohesion Guide – Local government Association 2004

Prevention of crime is also regarded as an additional positive outcome of involvement in sport and in consequence bringing significant economic savings to the country.

***“Intervention in the life of a young person at an early stage can reduce the risk that they will get involved in crime or anti-social behaviour.”***

A final outcome that is proffered, with substantial research evidence offered in support, is the benefits accorded the growing child during the years of formal education.

The arguments and evidence presented above are corroborated by research findings across the world. Quite ironically, a recent article written by two respected African academics based on research in Botswana presented similar rationale to support state intervention in sport. The irony lies in the fact that economically Botswana is dramatically far weaker than the UK, but the potential role of sport in addressing many of the country’s social, economic and political problems is regarded as crucial.

Botswana, with its population of 1.6 million, has adopted many of the sports of the industrialised world following independence in 1966. Nevertheless, lack of sports and recreation facilities and infrastructures, lack of a national sports policy and inadequate provision for sport in the school curriculum has severely restricted access to sport. The government of the country has now accepted the potential value of sport to address their health and welfare agendas. But acceptance of the value of sport has not been significantly translated, to date, in a noticeable increase in the provision of facilities or increased opportunity to participate. Crucially, however, is the acceptance of the need of the country’s government to address these issues for the social and economic prosperity of the nation. But there is evident in Botswana, a reality that frustrates increased participation in sport, namely the fact that participation in sport is not taken seriously by the general public. Lack of

parental support and an inadequate knowledge of the benefits of sport and exercise frustrate efforts to foster increased levels of participation. Where schooling is available, sport is often considered to be of marginal value; a subject that compromises serious education. Such a belief is not uncommon in the developing world. However, despite the problems identified in Botswana and many other developing countries, the value of sport is increasingly being recognised.

***“Sport in developing societies has a serious function to perform. It is (invariably) state controlled with specific utilitarian and ideological designs associated with hygiene, health, defence, patriotism, integration, productivity, international recognition, cultural identity and nation building.”***

Riorden, 1986

More recently, an article written, again, by Professors Amusa and Toriola, aligned more closely the developments in sport in many African countries with the rationale that underpins state provision and sponsorship of sport in the developed world. Their agendas ring true, with some notable and interesting exceptions to those of countries across Western Europe. For example, when expressing a potential value of sport, they identified a key value of sport in the African context:

***“Nation building, particularly in countries experiencing civil war and strife among ethnic groups.”***

Amusa and Toriola, 2005

Perhaps significant by its inclusion in their agendas for African countries, but often given scant attention in the sporting agendas in developed countries and certainly the UK, is the importance of creating opportunities for ***“entertainment, fun and play.”***

Sport is on the African political agenda, but in many countries the problems of creating ***‘Sport For All’*** may appear an impossible dream. The institutional barriers to sports development appear substantial. Participation by the disabled in sport is minimal, not least because disability is widely regarded as taboo or a curse in many African societies. Similarly, sex discrimination against women in sport is widespread across the continent, again as a consequence of traditional values or religious beliefs. The economic impoverishment of many African nations has an inevitable outcome.

***“The ever rising cost of construction of sports facilities, purchase of equipment and implementation of support systems make it very difficult for many African nations to cope***

***with these heavy demands. Most African governments allocate paltry resources for sports' promotion and development."***

Amusa and Toriola, 2005

Sadly the problems do not end there. A number of sports associations experience regular episodes of serious mal-administration and corruption to the detriment of goal realisation and advancement. Where these bodies have had some success, little attention is given to strategic planning and the establishment of long term objectives. Within the education system, sport and physical education is often marginalised and their importance discredited. African governments should take on some responsibility for sport and exercise management; no different a requirement than that accepted in the developed world.

***"Government support of sport should not lead to interference. (The role of government should involve) coordination, supervision, financing, quality control personnel development and maintenance, promoting sport for all and building capacity in sport industry and business."***

Amusa and Toriola, 2005

If only it were that easy!

The African continent is beset with natural and man-made crises that conspire to forever stifle progress, whether on the economic, social or political front. In June 2005 it was reported that 27 million people in 33 countries were at risk in a massive crisis gripping the African continent as a consequence of drought, adverse weather generally, civil strife, refugees, disease and economic collapse. Few countries are spared these harsh realities. In Sub-Saharan Africa 75% of the people live with HIV/Aids. In 2004, 3.2 million new cases were reported, with half of the newly infected individuals being between the ages of 15 and 24 years, especially among young women and girls. The scale of HIV/Aids infection on the continent receives universal publicity. Less so the fact that 1 in 16 African women dies in child birth. Every year, 4 million babies are still born globally, the majority in Africa. 1 in 6 children die before their 5<sup>th</sup>. birthday, a total of 4.7 million child deaths per annum. Tuberculosis is also a major cause of both child and adult morbidity and mortality in the region. 25% of the global notified TB cases every year are from Africa. A final statistic further confirms the tragedy of Africa. Approximately 60% of the estimated 350-500 million global, clinical malaria episodes and over 80% of the over 1 million deaths globally each year, occur on the African continent.

The challenges confronting health management in Africa are

***“...many and heavy, including weak and fragmented health systems; inadequate resources for scaling up proven interventions; limited access to health services and technologies and recurrent natural and man-made disasters and emergencies and extreme poverty.”***

World Health Organisation Feb 2005

There is some cheering statistical news coming out of Africa, but sadly the reality again proves cruel. Over the last decade the economies of Africa grew on average by 5%, but the bad news is that the growth will still not be enough to make a dent in the poverty of the continent. Almost half of the African population will still be forced to live on 1US\$ per day. Poverty is set to continue into the distant future.

The institutional problems confronting African sport almost pale into insignificance when the seriousness of the health-related issues and economic problems confronting Africa are presented. But Africa is not alone in experiencing such problems. Many are global in nature and extent, but the degree of severity may be tempered.

Against such odds what place sport?

Resolution of the multiple social, economic and political problems confronting Africa and much of the developing world depends on partnerships between the nation states themselves, international agencies and the developed world. The challenge is immense, but defeat cannot be allowed to be an outcome and sport can be a valuable ally. The rationales for government intervention in sport and presented above can be mobilised to bring relief and change. The United Nations and its agencies have been active on this front.

At the World Sports Forum in March 2000, the Deputy Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Adolf Ogi identified the potential role of sport in joining the business world, trades unions and non-governmental agencies in removing the scourge of child labour, in rehabilitating children, scarred by war. In the latter case, children can be rehabilitated and offered essential support through sports programmes. Sport can further provide the context for many educational programmes, perhaps most important of all in the fight against HIV/Aids. In September 2003 the UN turned to sport to advance the newly identified ***Millennium Goals***.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.

3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Combat HIV/Aids and other diseases.
6. Ensure environmental sustainability.
7. Develop a global partnership for development.

The ambition is to realise these goals by 2015. An ambition of epic proportions, requiring a global response.

***“The aim of the UN is the use of sport in broader development and peace building activities. The primary aim is to contribute to overall development via sport-related projects. The UN agencies’ preferred model for complementary ventures is the promotion of ‘Sport for All’, integrating play, recreation and sports activities.”***

Press Release – UN SAG/159

In December 2004 the General Assembly of the UN adopted a resolution that advocated ***“Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace.”*** The resolution was all-embracing, but it proves difficult to summarise the ambitious plans that sport and physical education was commissioned to address. These activities were now to be presented as key allies in the delivery of the Millennium Goals. Sport and physical education were identified as conduits for change in the developing world. Later, in 2004, the launch of the ***International Year of Sport and Physical Education*** was designed to provide a unique opportunity to make the case for development through sport.

***“Sport, with its joys and triumphs, its pains and defeats, its emotions and challenges, is an unrivalled medium for the promotion of education, health, development and peace.”***

Mr. Adolf Ogi, Special Advisor to the UN on Sport, August, 2004

The specialist UN agencies, including the International Labour Organisation (ILO), The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have all focused on the value of sport in their fields of work.

The subsequent initiatives to address the serious problems confronting both Africa and the rest of the developing world are legion. Suffice it to present a few examples to reveal the nature of these projects and their objectives. The Kenyan Community Sports Foundation is designed to promote both conflict resolution and HIV/Aids education through community sport, among the pastoralist communities in Kenya. The Foundation has developed twinned soccer schools in Kenya and Uganda to foster mutual understanding and enhance dialogue



among warring pastoralist communities in the two countries. In the sprawling slums of Eldoret in the Kenyan Rift Valley soccer camps have been established to combat anti-social behaviour among the disaffected youth. Since 2001 the UN has been involved in a sports programme in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya, with a sub agenda, with relevant partners, of developing environmental projects for income generation and the promotion of gender equality through sport. Further south on the continent in Zimbabwe and Malawi, international intervention through sport has the ambition of fostering community and social integration, as well as teaching gender equality. In Mali, an annual soccer tournament among schools spreads the HIV/ Aids awareness messages. Such initiatives abound across the continent. But sport is also fulfilling a role in developing countries around the world. In October 2005 ICSSPE promoted a conference focusing on the potential value of rehabilitation through physical activity and sport in the Tsunami-affected area of South East Asia.

The issues confronting the developing world are almost overwhelming. A multi-dimensional, multi-agency approach is essential. Sport has a potential role to play, though its impact must be kept in proportion. Nevertheless through *'Sport for All'*, valuable outcomes are possible. *'Education and Training'* are crucial in resolving the crises of the developing world and sport and physical activity can be one significant medium for advancement. Its key characteristic is the 'fun' it can generate and that is one key element that makes education such a rewarding experience.

But let me introduce a note of constructive cynicism.

Successful politicians are dependent on careful use, or perhaps sophisticated manipulation, of the media, and they have clear political objectives that require a variety of agencies, allies and facilitators to achieve success. Sport has proved, for many, to be a valuable ally. But sport has often been used then abused by these politicians. We all have knowledge of such individuals and the consequences for sport. I will remind you of a few.

Ronald Regan was re-elected in 1984 as President of the USA with a strong campaign platform as the "National Coach". He had a limited policy agenda, but the election was to be a mere victory lap of honour for a politician who had created an elite sporting persona out of a very modest college football career.

Margaret Thatcher, the 'iron lady' of British politics, was almost anti-sport, but still encouraged sport for all, especially among the lower social groups of British society to fulfil specific political objectives including social control and addressing the social problems associated with unemployment.

African leaders have similarly exploited sport, especially by being identified with their successful elite athletes. President Kenyatta of Kenya was an expert in this use of sport.

Our knowledge of the actions of these and numerous other politicians in the developing world should make us realise politicians have political agendas, allegiances and often personal ambition. In their hands is something so dear to our hearts – but not all will nurture sport and protect it and prevent its exploitation. Respected individuals, such as Mr Adolf Ogi, speak with passion and speak with sincerity and commitment. Sadly in the developing world, just as in the developed world, national leaders through to local politicians are not necessarily so honourable, but it is in their hands and hearts that sport for all is to be eventually nurtured. As a political observer my confidence in their commitment to deliver sport for all is tempered and feeds my academic cynicism.

Valuable as the 100's of sports projects currently operating in the developing world may be and the associated valuable publicity they might bring, let us not take our eye off the more important ball, namely the catastrophic, underlying crises facing the people of these nations.

Thank you

Terry Monnington  
Director of Physical Education and Sport  
University of Warwick  
07/11/2005