

Youth and Development: What the study of Sports Sociology can do in India?

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Abstract

Over the past decade, UN agencies, international sport federations, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and national governments have been using sport as a tool for development. The crucial rationale that can be attributed to this belief is documented from studies that under appropriate conditions physical health benefits of sport such as prevention of diseases, lessening of likelihood of unhealthy practices (such as illegal drug use and unsafe sex), potential to positively influence social integration and inclusion of people with disabilities, women and girls, enhancement of self-worth and the likes contribute to the social fabric of our society. The level of development of a Nation which was initially considered only in economic terms limiting itself to dependence on industrial, agricultural and/or service sectors, is witnessing a paradigm shift.

Key Words :- Youth, Development, Sports, Sociology, Community

In most developing nations today, young people make up the largest segment of the population — in some cases more than 50%. In most cases, the number of young people will peak in the next 10 years, in some cases in the next 20 years. This means that countries will be facing significant fiscal pressures to fund secondary education and the prevention of non-communicable and infectious diseases such as HIV and AIDS. The large number of young people also offers an historic opportunity. The emerging workforce is young, and the overall population contains relatively few elderly individuals and children to support.

For governments, this can free up resources to invest in things like human capital that yield high development returns. To maximize the opportunity this young cohort presents, it is important to invest in and support today's children and youth. While the early years are an important determinant of a child's future, adolescence is also critical multiple transitions that set the stage for adult life.

'Sport-in- development', refers to the development through sport, where sport is a vehicle for sociological and/or human development. In recent years, the idea of sport in international development has earned greater credibility from some of the world's most prominent organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Economic Forum.

States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the focus of this investigation, is a geographical term used to describe the area of the India, located north of the India. It is one of the poorest states in India, suffering from the effects of economic mismanagement, corruption in the local government, and inter-ethnic conflict. From a number of literatures, three strong links toward sport and reduction of poverty in India can be identified. The prime aim of this research is to analyze the Sociological development through sports. This research is premised on the argument that the wealth and power exposure currently associated with sports in India,

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coupled with its status as one of the most coalescing features of Indian culture and society, presents it as a potentially powerful tool for development in India. As such, the broad aim of this study is to explore trends and debates from the emerging 'development through sport' literature, as well as those from wider development theory, in the context of sports in India. **Research Background**

The idea that well-being of a country only on the pretext of economic growth was challenged by the United Nation's Declaration on the Right of Development (1986): *development* is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and the fair distribution of benefits there from.

Perhaps when we talk of development, more pervasively there should be a talk of Sport. Sport implies to all kinds of physical activities that contribute to physical fitness, psychological well-being and social interface, such as structured or competitive sport, play, recreation, and aboriginal sports and games (Dixon, Warner and Bruening, 2010). Indians have long held onto notions of egalitarianism and the "fair go", and yet Indian society is becoming increasingly divisive. In India, as with many other western countries, the gap between rich and poor is widening and the divide between those with and without access to sport and recreation opportunities and facilities is increasing (Collins & Kay, 20013). Some argue that the new global policy orthodoxy on economic reforms, such as those inherent and hegemonic in neo-liberalism, has increased poverty, social polarization, and social diversity (Harvey, 2009). The ramification on governments, social programs, and state policy of this ideology demands a new understanding of how social programs can be restructured and operated, as well as possible implication for sport management.

Although India ranked among the top ten nations of the world in terms of economic growth in the 1990s, inequality as evidenced by sustained unemployment, an increasingly casualized workforce, and a return to the working poor was amongst the highest in the industrialized world. Indeed, the richest 20 percent of the population in India earned roughly ten times that earned by its poorest sector. This has produced a polarization in Indian society with both the top and bottom of the scale of income or wealth distribution growing faster than the middle, thus shrinking the middle, and sharpening social differences between two extreme segments of the population (Singh, 2009). These outcomes have implications for the delivery of sport, building of sound communities, and for increases in concomitant social ills.

Over the last decade sport and recreation policy-makers have had to adjust to neoliberal and globalization processes as they impact on social, economic, and state activities, including those of social inclusion and sociological development. How governments move from financial and policy provision for sport and other "embedded liberalism" (the former "welfare state") provisions to current neoliberal state ones resulted in major changes (Harvey, 2005). In the "neoliberal state" private-public partnerships, tax advantages (and expectations) for

corporate social responsibility (CSR), and the reduction of social solidarity become key aspects of the new institutional framework (Mellor, 2009). This implies that development or sociological level sport should operate under market conditions and institutional frameworks inherent in neoliberalism and globalism

Introduction to Sociological development through sports

In recent years, the idea of sport in international development has earned greater credibility from some of the world's most prominent organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Economic Forum. In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the year as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education (IYSPE) and in the same year the 'Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group' (SDPIWG) was formed. The General Assembly resolution 58/5 urges all states to 'ensure sport and physical education are a mainstream in their development objectives (United Nations, 2009)'. September 2005, at the World Summit at the UN headquarters the outcome document, General Assembly document 60/1, agreed on by the largest-ever gathering of Heads of States and Government highlighted the significance of the role of sociological development through sports (Beutler, 2009).

"We underline that sports can foster peace and development and can contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding, and we encourage discussions in the General Assembly for proposals leading to a plan of action on sport and development." (United Nations, 2009)

By the turn of 2010, there were in fact 194 NGOs engaged in, listed on the 'International Platform on Sport for Development' website (IPSDP, 2010). Emphasised as a 'simple, low-cost, and effective means' (United Nations, 2009) of achieving development goals, it is evident in recent years that the widespread policy support for sports-based programmes are being recognised as a vehicle for social and human development.

Relationships of Sports and sociological development in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in India

Figure: India

States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the focus of this investigation, is a geographical term used to describe the area of the India, located north of the India. It is one of the poorest states in India, suffering from the effects of economic mismanagement, corruption in the local

government, and inter-ethnic conflict (Collier, 2010). From a number of literatures, three strong links toward sport and reduction of poverty in India can be identified.

‘Development through sport’

There are two positions: The position of sports in India in the first instance, and the inequality and underdevelopment evident in India in the second. It is the seemingly tenuous juncture between these two features of India’s culture and society in which this thesis attempts to intervene. Research concerning sport and development is not without precedent, and has its roots in the United Nations’ (UN) (2009) publication titled *Sport for Development and Peace: Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, which outlines the positive impacts that sport can have in the key development areas of health, education and the economy, as well as the influence it can have in achieving social integration and resolving conflict. Since then, a number of studies have explored the use of sport for development purposes. None, however, specifically pertain to the implementation, or even potential, of ‘development through sport’ projects involving sports in India, which essentially provides the scope for this research.

Research Aim and Objectives

This research is premised on the argument that the wealth and power exposure currently associated with sports in India, coupled with its status as one of the most coalescing features of Indian culture and society, presents it as a potentially powerful tool for development in India. As such, the broad aim of this thesis is to explore trends and debates from the emerging ‘development through sport’ literature, as well as those from wider development theory, in the context of sports in India

Research Questions

Within this broad aim, this study seeks to address the following three research questions:

1. How and why can sports be used for social development purposes in the states of UP and Bihar in India
2. What role do government authorities and their commercial and social partners have in the formulation and implementation of social development initiatives in India?
3. What are the ways through social development through sports can be implemented in the states of UP and Bihar in India

Literature Review

The topic of the research, ‘sociological development through sport’, has been used as a mainstay of many sports programmes in India. The objective of this research is to find out the practicality of the use of sport in sociological development, focusing on India as a demographic area.

The literature review will define and introduce the concept of ‘people-centred development’ or the so-called ‘bottom-up’ approach to development, which is a central theme in many sports sociological development initiatives. It draws attention to the work of NGOs that focus its practices at the grassroots level. Examples offer analysis of different types and approaches to the use of sports in sociological development.

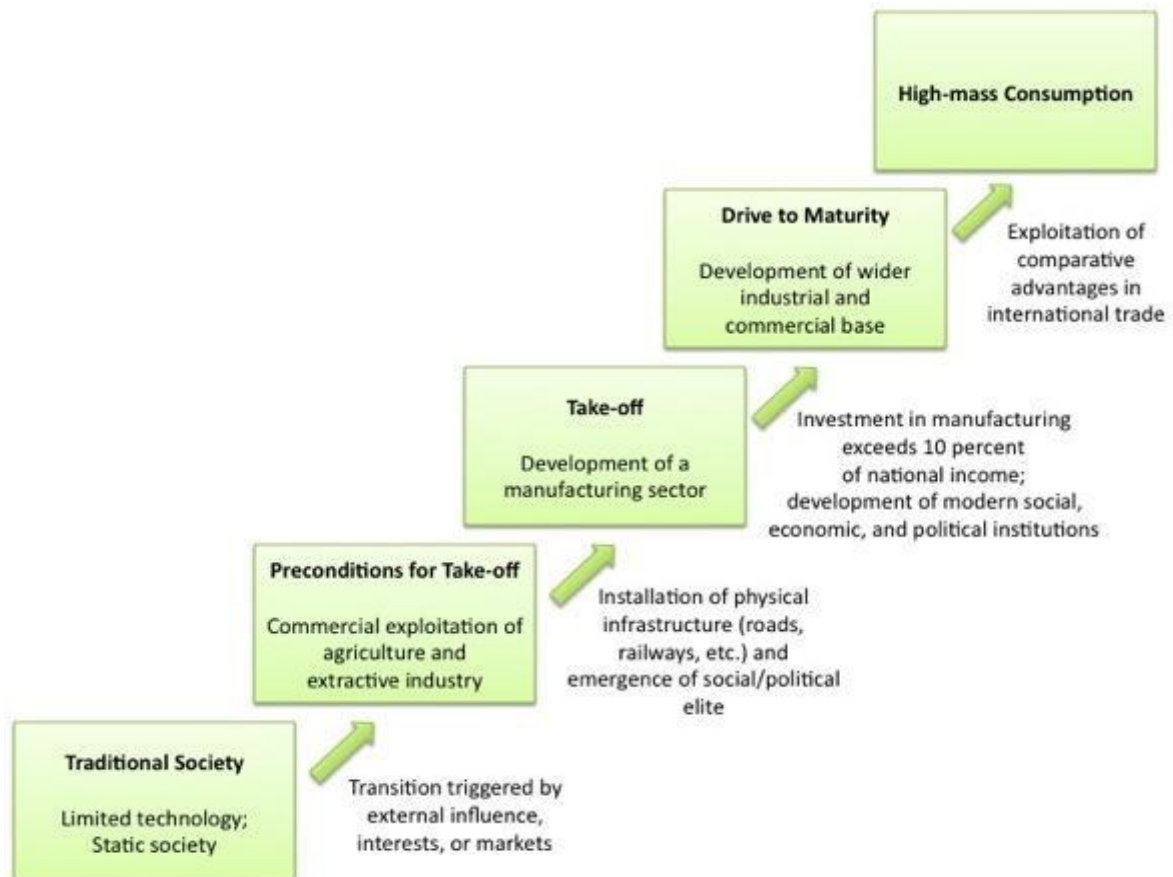
Finally, it will outline problems at the policy level using case study of Botswana’s national sports policy. It aims to outline major barriers for sociological development through sports, as a movement, to gain further recognition as an effective tool for development.

Throughout history, sport has aroused the interest of the scholarly and artistic alike. The significance of games is embedded in the ancient Greek philosophies of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (Eime et al, 2010), while William Shakespeare and Theophile du Viau, among others, used sport as a metaphor for warfare, politics and sexual conquest in their plays and poems of the fifteenth century (Segrave, 2010). Sport, most notably sports, continued to feature in prose throughout the Victorian era in the work of distinguished writers such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, George Meredith and James Joyce (Bateman, 2009). The nineteenth century saw sport emerge as an overt and legitimate subject in the field of anthropology, beginning with the publication of Sir Edward Burnett Tylor’s ‘The History of Games’ in 1879, and followed up by articles written by James Mooney and Stewart Culin (Baron & Kenney, 2011). Since then, sport has infiltrated a plethora of academic disciplines. For example, “sociology, philosophy, psychology and history, each have their sport-related sub-discipline” (Fredricks and Eccles, 2010), while sport is also researched within faculties of medicine, nutrition, law and statistics.

The other body of literature which informs this research is ‘development’, and more specifically the inter-sub disciplinary concept of ‘development through sport’. While this concept has been gaining prominence over the past two decades (Kidd, 2009), efforts remained largely disparate until the Secretary-General convened a United Nations (UN) Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace in July 2002 (Gould et al, 2010). The subsequent publication of ‘Sport for Development and Peace: Towards Achieving Millennium Development Goals’ (UN, 2009) provided the catalyst for a more coalescing approach to ‘development through sport’, and much has been written since. This review charts the progress of this literature, exploring the merit of the ‘development through sport’ concept as it is implemented in developing countries worldwide. While the volume of literature on the concept has expanded in recent years, its application in India is largely ignored. As such, this review will conclude by discussing the concept of ‘development through sport’ in the context of India, arguing that the wealth and identity currently attached to sports in India presents it as a potentially powerful tool for development in the country’s disadvantaged communities. It is this argument, coupled with the dearth of current literature, which ultimately provides the motivation for this research.

Sociological Development

The origin of the term ‘sociological development’ is commonly situated in the late 1940s and, more specifically, linked to President Truman’s inaugural address in 1949 in which he used the term ‘underdeveloped areas’ to describe what was soon to be known as the ‘Third World’ (De Knop et al, 2009). Initial manifestations of sociological development focused on generating economic growth, as countries with strong economies were seen as more developed than those with weak economies, and so ‘to develop’ was to enhance a state’s economic output (McGregor, 2009). Growth theory evolved into modernization theory in the 1960s with Rostow’s (1960) *The Stages of Economic Growth*, which argued that all countries must pass through five predetermined stages in the sociological development process. Thus, sociological development largely constituted top-down approaches, based on industrialization, from the 1950s through to the early 1970s (De Knop et al, 2009). The emergence of the ‘New Right’ in the 1980s saw a return to a market-driven approach, referred to as neo-liberalism, and became entrenched in the policies of international sociological development agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Evans, 2010).



Rostow’s five-stage model of sociological development (Source: Evans, 2010).

Such approaches to sociological development, however, have drawn a number of criticisms, most notably that they are situated in Western European history and experience, and thus represent Eurocentric sociological development thinking (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2010; Brohm, 2009). Other critiques of these approaches include, but are not limited to, their assumption that sociological development is a linear process that all nations can follow in an unconstrained manner (Coakley, 2012); the assumption that sociological development has an endpoint which suggests that, once achieved, a country is ‘developed’ (Gould et al, 2009); their strong focus on economic growth, with little consideration for the sociological development and cultural implications (Green, 2010); and their focus on the entire state, rather than the needs of individual communities (Birchwood, Roberts and Pollock, 2010).

Concept of sociological development and its relation with sports

Similarly to most abstract and popular sociological concepts, the sociological development concept is contested. However, the purpose of this section is not to contribute to a general conceptual discussion (Burawoy, 2009), but to find a way to apply the social-capital concept productively for the specific topic of this article. The first step is to consider the two words making up the concept. First, ‘capital’ is something that might give a future benefit. Capital combined with ‘social’ then leaves us with social relations of a special kind – containing and, potentially, generating resources – which, in the future, might have implications for actions in and postures towards other social actors or arenas. In this context, the social relations will be those emerging from participation in voluntary sport organizations; the implications are social trust and political interests.

Beyond this very basic understanding of what is implied by sociological development, some of the more consequential controversies in the conceptual debate indicate what is at stake. A first consideration is whether sociological development is an individual or a collective asset. Both possibilities are of potential sociological utility and interest, but in a context where the focus is on how individuals participating in one social arena differ – because of the social relations established within this arena – in their approach to other arenas (trust, interest), the most fruitful approach is to say that sociological development is an individual asset based in social relations. This does not imply that the instrumentalism inherent to much individualistic sociology is uncritically adopted: becoming a member of a voluntary organization might lead to certain effects later on, but the sociological development in question is not necessarily the result of intentional investments aimed at future benefits; they are, to a large extent probably the unintended consequences of instrumental, normative and/or expressive actions.

A second issue is whether sociological development involves closing of social groups or opening up of new social relations (for Bourdieu, social stratification versus social mobility). Again, both approaches yield interesting analytical possibilities, but in this study it has been emphasized that the bridging effect, i.e. the question will mainly be how social relations within one context (i.e. sociological development) have implications for how

members of voluntary sport organizations face specific external phenomena (whether they trust other people, whether they are interested in politics). This approach also implies a stance on a third issue. Both Coleman and Putnam are regularly accused of confusing causes and effects when it comes to analyses of sociological development, and the problem is that the concept readily takes on a tautological form: social capital (social relations) produces sociological development (trust) (Giddens, 2012). The reason for these apparently enduring problems is that the sociological development concept often pretends to examine a rather restricted phenomenon, but actually describes a whole process. The crux of the phenomena is a (set of) social relation(s), but next, this relation depends on its consequences for passing as what it is; social relations turn out as sociological development when a manifestation of a latent resource potential is fulfilled. To meet this challenge, it has been considered that generalized trust, norms or political engagement, etc., not as sociological development, but as social phenomena that might be influenced – increase or decrease – by variations in types and amounts of sociological development.

In sketching a theoretical framework for how sociological development should be approached for sport sociological studies, I have chosen to focus on sociological development as an individual asset, as one sequence of a more extended social process and outwardly bridging rather than bonding. Furthermore, it has been emphasized that the need for breaking down what often appears as a tautological approach to manageable analytical components: sociological development (social relations) with an impending outcome (trust, political interest). Finally, I have also pointed out the necessity of identifying social mechanisms associated with these social processes. Yet, this is still general theory at a rather abstract level, and to get closer to how members of voluntary sport organizations actually possess sociological development and how it eventually works, it has been attempted to see how different discourses more oriented to this specific issue have actually understood these processes.

Sociology of sport and sociological development

Looking to a more specific sport sociological discourse, not explicitly occupied with how social capital or civil society works or operates, arguments strongly in favour of participation in sport as conducive to various social competencies (though not very clear exactly which) that seem close to sociological development and that should, by all means, have positive social and political implications: ‘Sports can teach. Sports can shape. Sports can unify. Sports can comfort. Sports can uplift’ (Gayles, 2009), or ‘Sport trains young people to become independent, self controlled, resolute, responsible, and communal in their outlook’ (Gayles, 2009). This is in accordance with a traditional upper-class view associated with ‘English sport’, emphasizing that sport is an activity that involves building of character through social cooperation (Giddens, 2012)

Yet, the opposite view is perhaps just as commonly offered. First, on a general societal level, based on various critical perspectives, several authors question the ability of

sport to fulfil such positive visions because of its narrow and one-dimensional focus on competitive success, processes of commercialism and professionalism (Giulianotti, 2009). Still others ask if modern sport is not about to turn into the opposite of such classic ideals through cultural developments; as a place of male chauvinism, nationalism, one-dimensional instrumentalism, racism and violence. If the insights from sport sociology should be given hypothetical forms besides a general pro and contra, distinctions have to be made between different aspects of sport activities: various types of activities (e.g. team sport versus individual sport), various sport, various social groups and cultures and competitive level.

Sport as an entry point for the youth

One of the most identifiable features of communities in India is a large proportion of young people. Statistics provided by the Government Census (2009) show that more than 60% of the population in India are younger than 35 years of age. Sport, as a gateway to participation, has been linked as a strong tool to engage young people to take interest in works of foreign aid programmes across India.

There is a widespread assumption that taking part in sport and other physical activity results in better academic achievement. The presumed (although unproven) mechanisms underpinning this relationship vary and include:

- Increased energy derived from fitness
- Productive diversion resulting from time away from classroom
- Reduced disruptive behaviour
- Improved cognitive functioning as a result of increased cerebral blood flow or improvement of brain neurotransmitters
- A relationship between motor and mental skills and increased self-esteem.

(Weiss and Hayashi, 2012)

However, the factors involved are complex and raise significant issues of measurement. For example, in a major review of relevant research, Kenyon and Loy (2011) concluded that the largest measured relationships are obtained from the weakest research designs and the weakest relationships are found in the most robust research designs.

However, within this context, there are some suggestive findings:

- Donnelly (2011) concluded that the benefits of regular exercise on cognitive functioning are small but reliable for reaction time, sharpness and maths.
- Gouldner (2010) found that both short-term and sustained exercise programmes resulted in small positive gains in cognitive performance (such as reaction time, perception, memory and reasoning).

- Inspections of specialist Sports Colleges in England have shown early signs that examination results in physical education and other subjects are improving since physical education and sport have become central elements of the colleges (Gruneau, 2010).

Contrary to the fears of some parents, research undertaken with control groups and using standardised tests suggests that devoting substantially increased school time to physical education and sport does not have a detrimental effect on pupils' academic performance – while also conferring physical and mental health benefits (Gruneau, 2010).

Conclusion

The research work has indicated that sport is a useful tool, in various ways, to build sociological development, foster community development, and build sustainability. That is, many positive outcomes have been achieved by using sport in this manner, even if most of this is reported anecdotally and these follow new neoliberal's principles and practices. This still begs the question of directionality (sport builds sociological development, sociological development aids sport, or reciprocity exists). The case of both states also indicates an issue saliently identified by review of past studies. Past studies have discussed such government based initiatives or involvements as being top down, not clearly dealing with the issues in those localities, wasteful of human resources in the target communities, being ideologically-driven, and promoting current social inequalities (i.e., perpetuating the status quo). Such programs do not connect with the communities for which they are identified. This also provides a strong argument against older state welfare policies and programs, even though ideology is also central in this new approach.

The primary research conducted in the research work by means of interviews and questionnaire also emphasizes the points raised past studies and additionally offers two different types of sociological development through sport process. The researcher in the present research has argued that a sustainable sport-based community development initiative requires four core components: community selection (community's "readiness" and capacity to change); the need for a community catalyst(s)/champion(s) to provide process leadership (not *de facto* hierarchical leadership); the need to build a cadre of collaborative group/community partnerships (from a wide cross section of people and organizations who share a vision and have the capacity to achieve that vision through true collaboration and true shared decision-making); and the need to promote sustainability through community development processes. These elements are variously evident in the examples provided above, but not in a holistic way. This research has argued against the traditional, status quo "sports programming" approach, where programs are dropped-into settings without proper needs assessment in the community, the use of off the shelf programs and marketing, and delivering programs in short-term episodes without ensuring the people and other community-based resources are properly developed. That is, they often miss matters of sport sustainability and true community development.

Here we confront several issues for current and incipient sport managers. One could reasonably critique many current sport management programs and practices. Do current sport managers, or do current sport management education programs, really understand and employ community development models? Is sufficient emphasis placed on community development and the role of sport can play in that development. If sport policy and programs are imposed on communities without the elements emphasized by this research sport managers need to consider what the implications are for creating sustainable effective sporting opportunities that may result in positive sociological development outcomes. This critique indicates that sport managers and future sport managers require ongoing education to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to provide sport programs (i.e., deliver properly targeted policy) that can facilitate community development and bring about positive social change in diverse communities. Education programs for incipient sport managers should help students work to employ a community development perspective and develop and deliver sustainable sport interventions, based on the real needs of the communities and on sustainable community development models.

While there is currently little direct evidence that sport contributes to sociological development through fostering social inclusion and community development, sport does have substantial social value. This is particularly so in India, as sport particularly cricket is widely recognized as a core component of the social and cultural fabric of Indian communities.

It provides an excellent “hook” for engaging people who may be suffering from disadvantage and providing a supportive environment to encourage and assist those individuals in their social development, learning, and connection through related programs and services.

These approaches are at the heart of the neoliberals agenda to improve individual freedom and opportunity. Sport and Recreation practitioners are passionate about the impacts their programs have on individuals and their social development. While this is largely anecdotal, new evaluation tools are attempting to capture meaningful data to contribute to the evidence base for this claim.

Long-term viability or sustainability in delivering social outcomes is central to the success of these developments through sport programs. Modern society demands more flexibility and choice and this should also be true of how communities and individuals access range of opportunities. A one size fits all approach will not meet all community needs. The challenge for the traditional sport sector in UP is to move beyond current sport delivery practices to provide a range of products including low cost locally developed grass roots opportunities and extended public/private/third sector linking sociological development programs. There is a danger however, in relying on this predominantly volunteer based sector to deliver social outcomes.

In Bihar on the other hand, the opportunity exists for NGOs, with government support, to establish long-term viable programs that use sport to engage with communities to

deliver social outcomes. Partnerships between the traditional sport sector and NGOs could be forged to support participation in sport across the continuum from outreach to mainstream participation. Suffice to say, this could potentially open the way.

For the development of a “third way” in Bihar where community-based organizations provide local grass-root sports participation opportunities for their communities, with strong linkages, collaborations, shared decision-making capacities, and partnerships with community groups and organizations, including mainstream sport. Donnelly (2007) provides the following summation:

All sport and recreation provision should be based on long term, established funding; should be continually monitored and evaluated in light of ongoing research, and should, for the most part, be offered for the purposes of social opportunity and social development.

From the above literature and examples, we note the following criteria to effectively use sport in social development and as a vehicle to contribute to development of sociological development/social inclusion within disadvantaged communities. First, programs should be designed with regard to the local assets (e.g., infrastructure, people, revenues, networks) available in the target communities. Second, sport-based social inclusion programs should be local area based and address and respond to individual community needs utilizing a social development approach. Third, monitoring and evaluation should form an integral component of the program from conception to implementation and should contribute to the evidence base. Finally, development of “third way” sports programs should be explored by all sectors with a view to mainstream or long-term funding ensuring sustainability.

A broad array of positive community networks and relationships can be developed through engagement with sport. This engagement can create opportunities that can foster social inclusion and community development, which in turn, can assist in building high levels of positive sociological development. Importantly, future research and education programs should seek to develop the tangible means by which to facilitate these processes.

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