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REVIEW



## Framing a 21st century case for the social value of sport in South Africa

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### ABSTRACT

Following recent global stakeholder configurations, policy frameworks and strife for multi-levelled and agency policy coherence within the Sport for Development and Peace sector, the Kazan Action Plan (2017) calls for evidence-informed decision-making though building a case for sport in playing a part in sustainable development as envisaged by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. As Sport and Recreation South Africa is in the process of updating the 2009 Case for Sport and Recreation document it is deemed timely that academic discourse of evidence production should be addressed. This paper provides a synopsis of robust evidence around the social impact of sport relating to global strategic imperatives emanating for UN agencies (particularly UNICEF and UNESCO), regional and national public sport structures. Contextual realities further present a filter for relevant data and arguments to capture a meaningful body of knowledge from which decision-makers can draw significant insights. The social role of sport within national government priorities in South Africa features phenomena related to nation-building, cohesion and social transformation with relevance to the 'panacea proposition' of sport. The methodological rigor, critical scrutiny, programme theories and the complexity of layering realities should drive the profiling of an evidence base that would also serve a decolonised approach towards theory-building.

### KEYWORDS

UN agencies; sport; Sport for Development and Peace; research evidence; South Africa

### Introduction

This paper taps into a watershed phase in the global-local articulation of the Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) movement – a transition from the initial explosion of attracting multiple stakeholders for policy development, funding and implementation to a search for synergies at all levels of engagement (Collison et al. 2018; Kidd 2008). Since 2005, SDP gained momentum with the appointment of a United Nations Special Advisor, the establishment of a UN Office for Sport, Development and Peace (UNOSDP) and Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDP IWG) (UN 2008). By 2015, the SDP sector lost momentum and represented a rather complex landscape of thousands of entrepreneurs and agencies with policies, funding or implementing SDP programmes developed and delivered in silos that posed challenges for sustainable development and contextual relevance (Sportanddev.org 2017).

In the aftermath of the Millennium Development Goals (post-2015), UN agencies changed direction in search for inter-agency collaboration and global partnerships that resulted in the closure of UNOSDP in 2017 and the establishment of an Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) in 2018 (IHRB 2018; IOC 2013). The United Nations streamlined SDP work across their agencies. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) took leadership in global policy development for physical education and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) drove a human rights agenda through SDP partnerships (IHRB 2018). Other global stakeholders formed partnerships with UN agencies and embarked on a shared agenda in promoting human and social development for outcomes according to their different mandates.

In 2017, the World Health Organisation (WHO) embarked on a global strategy concerning health-inducing physical education, physical activity and sport (Vuori 2018). In the same year, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) became a "direct partner" and committed the Olympic Movement to intensify the implementation of sustainable development initiatives as initially proclaimed at the UN 2012 Rio + 20 Conference (Huffpost 2017; IOC 2014). Although sport does not feature within the global goals or targets, the fraternity brings a network of interdependent agencies that utilise sport directly and indirectly to address global issues earmarked for development (IHRB 2018; IOC 2013; SRSA 2018, 103). Such a roadmap is well aligned strategically to the IOC's Agenda 2020 which was accepted in 2014 at the 127<sup>th</sup> IOC session in Monaco (IOC 2014). This transfer of shared responsibilities between UN agencies and the Olympic Movement paved the way for the sport sector to engage in outreach programmes aligned with developmental outcomes for broader society. It also challenged them to address issues such as gender equity and inclusion of people for the lower economic stratus in sport leadership and participation. Reaching out to youth in impoverished contexts, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) built event legacy programmes around educational initiatives and offering increased opportunities for underprivileged youth to participate in different programmes – from sport to leadership and acquiring work-related competencies. This is evidenced by various FIFA legacy projects, including building Football for Hope centres across Africa associated with the 2010 FIFA World Cup (Burnett & Hollander 2013; Sadecky 2006). Academic scrutiny of these centres have not been forthcoming and current literature signal the increase of participation opportunities for impoverished communities (Manzo 2012).

The mobilisation of governments for accountable, integrated and sustainable implementation of SDP featured on the UN agenda. In 2017, MINEPS VI (Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for Physical Education and Sport) proclaimed an era for action regarding policy implementation of mainstream SDP work by addressing issues of policy coherence and collective action where Ministries of Sport and Education took on a key leadership role. The MINEPS VI meetings were chaired by the Chair of the SDP IWG, who is also the Deputy Minister of Sport and Recreation in South Africa, and set out to elicit regional and inter-governmental collaboration as stipulated by the Kazan Action Plan (SRSA 2018, 9). Regional synergy meant alignment with the African Union's (AU) strategic framework that articulates with Pan-African identity formation, good governance and a people-driven human rights framework (SRSA 2018, 9). No specific steps followed from the AU except for policy alignment – a strategy that was supported by various actors, including the Commonwealth Games Secretariat that is highly active in policy development and SDP advocacy on the African continent (Lindsey & Chapman 2017).

It is against this landscape and influenced by his leadership role in chairing the MINEPS VI meetings that South Africa's Deputy Minister of Sport and Recreation embarked on an initiative to request research in support for a "case for sport". The latter should substantiate the contribution of sport (in a broad sense) for positive outcomes in the fields of health, education, international relationships, the economy, social transformation and nation building (SRSA 2018). In his reflection on accepting a revised International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, he emphasised

...the potential of sport to serve as a valuable and cost effective tool for peace-building, peace keeping, social cohesion and nation-building... However, the Charter will have little impact if we and our partners do not ensure that the Articles of the Charter are translated into well-defined action plans. We all need to work hard to achieve the noble, but practical objectives of the Charter and by doing so contributing in building peaceful communities, countries and a better world." (UNESCO 2019, 4)

Since the transition to majority rule in post-Apartheid South Africa (1994), Sport and Recreation South Africa (Ministry, SRSA) implemented multiple initiatives that utilised sport for socio-political reform and nation building (SRSA 2012). A priority for building solidarity is to overcome the socio-political divides based on class, race or ethnicity, gender, disability and refugees or migrants from other African countries (SRSA 2012, 2017).

The aim of the paper is to provide supportive and robust evidence in the envisaged outcomes associated with the social value of sport as framed by the strategic thrusts of SRSA. Therefore, the paper addresses two key strategic national objectives relating to social cohesion and nation building as politically-driven outcomes in post-Apartheid South Africa. Finding robust evidence with clear causal relationships between sport-related interventions and social outcomes, required critical evaluation and proof of methodological rigour (Evans et al. 2015). It is no easy feat to find indisputable evidence beyond positivist approaches, avoiding the "panacea" proposition of self-professed (life-changing) outcomes and meaningfully capturing and making sense of "local voices" (Collison et al. 2016; Okada and Banda 2018; Wilson 2014). Another challenge was to deal with conceptual blurriness of what constitutes "sustainable development" with relevance to the Sub-Saharan context of poverty (Langer, 2015; Walsh et al. 2012, 1).

The paper is structured to, firstly provide contextual evidence of social issues that SDP initiatives could address and show strategic alignment of global and national strategic priorities related to social issues or themes. Secondly, a "case for sport" is argued based on scientific evidence to substantiate issues of social cohesion and nation-building, social transformation, human rights (equality and inclusion), and using sport as a tool for addressing issues of social deviances ("ills"). The paper concludes by commenting on the complexity of measuring sustainable impact and refer to the contextual factors affecting positive social outcomes.

## **Global-National alignment for sport-for-development**

The alignment of global-national development priorities is shown in Table 1 – linking the three main policy areas identified by the Kazan Action Plan to 20 specific areas and aligning the latter with policy and national policy priorities of SRSA (2018). For example, main policy area II refers to 'maximising the contributions of sport to sustainable development and peace'. This main policy area articulates with eight specific policy areas referring to

safety, inclusivity, equality and accountability at society and community levels. In turn, the latter articulates with five national-level strategic priorities and envisaged outcomes with reference to actionable social outcomes in creating safe, inclusive, equitable and accountable policy-related practices. As stipulated by the Kazan Action Plan, building a case for sport is at the heart of convincing government and other stakeholders – from trans-national and national corporates to civic society (NGOs) to play a part in utilising sport for multiple and multi-levelled social outcomes (See [Table 2](#)).

Policies do not necessarily translate into delivering the envisaged outcomes as there may be contextual challenges, such as political unrest, a lack of resources or entrenched ideology and divisions that are difficult to overcome. Contemporary South Africa is a country torn by deep socio-economic and racial divisions, whilst bearing the scars of multiple “social ills”. Violence is an everyday occurrence for many. For instance, South Africa’s murder rate is about four and a half times higher than the global average of 6.9 murders per 100 000 ([Africa Check 2013](#)). Xenophobia exists and school-based violence

**Table 1.** Kazan Action Plan policy areas and actions for social impact.

Main Policy Areas	Specific Policy Areas	From policy to practice: for social impact
Main Policy Area I - Developing a comprehensive vision of inclusive access for all	I.1 Align with Sustainable Development Priorities	i) Address policy coherence – global, regional, national, local (vertical) and within/across sectors (horizontal) (1.1.) ii) Establish/facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships/collaboration (1.2) iii) Foster quality practices – sport, PE and PA (schools & community, etc.) (1.3) and lifelong learning (II.3)* iv) Promote/produce research and evidence (1.4) v) Foster empowerment and inclusion – gender, youth, marginalised populations (1.5-1.7, II.6)*
	I.2 Establish multi-stakeholder partnerships	
	I.3 Foster quality physical education and active schools	
	I.4 Promote research-based evidence and strengthen higher education	
	I.5 Enforce gender equality/Empower girls and women	
	I.6 Foster the inclusion of youth in decision-making	
	I.7 Foster empowerment and inclusive participation	
Main Policy Area II - Maximising the contributions of sport to sustainable development and peace	II.1 Improve health and well-being of all, at all ages	i) Improve health and well-being for all (II.1) ii) Make cities and places safe, resilient and sustainable (II.2) iii) Build peaceful, inclusive and equitable societies (II.4) iv) Provide/facilitate economic growth and full, productive employment/work/income-generation for all (II.5) v) Build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (II.8, III.3)*
	II.2 Make cities and settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	
	II.3 Provide quality education and promote lifelong learning for all	
	II.4 Build peaceful, inclusive and equitable societies	
	II.5 Provide economic growth and full and productive employment and work for all	
	II.6 Advance gender equality and empower all women and girls	
	II.7 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns and take urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts	
	II.8 Build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	
Main Policy Area III - Protecting the integrity of sport	III.1 Safeguard athletes, spectators, workers and other groups involved	i) Protect children, youth and other vulnerable groups (III.2)
	III.2 Protect children, youth and other vulnerable groups	
	III.3 Foster good governance of sports organizations	
	III.4 Strengthen measures against manipulation of sports competitions	
	III.5 Ensure an adequate anti-doping policy framework, its implementation and effective compliance measures	

is widespread with alarming statistics stating that 12.2% children had been threatened with violence; 6.3% had been assaulted; 4.7% had been sexually assaulted or raped, and 4.5% had been robbed (Burton & Leoschut 2013; Daily Maverick 2015).

South African society mirrors global patterns of inequality in addition to severe racial divides where the majority of South Africans were socio-politically and economically marginalised due to the system of Apartheid (SRSA 2018). In June 2017, an analysis of global multidimensional poverty spans a number of topics, such as destitution, regional and sub-national variations in poverty of which 36% resided in Sub-Saharan Africa (OPHI 2017). South Africa is socio-economically a highly unequal society with a Gini coefficient (income inequality) of 0.68 where 13.8 million people live in extreme poverty (with the Food Poverty Line estimated at R441 about \$15 per month) (Stats SA 2017b). South Africa's 2016 unemployment rate of 26.7% puts it in the bottom 10 countries in the world (BusinessTech 2016), whilst the youth unemployment in 2017 reached an all-time high of 55.9% (Trade Economics 2017). Presenting a case for sport thus cuts to the core of social divisions and continued challenges faced by South Africans on a daily basis.

It is widely accepted that sport is no panacea for such entrenched inequalities and consequent manifestations of poverty, but in providing selected evidence, it may contribute to alleviate some symptoms and play a part in a comprehensive approach towards achieving strategic development outcomes of the government sector in alignment with global targets and initiatives. Presenting a case for sport does not mean that negative outcomes, such as drug abuse, cheating and exclusive practices are not present in sport, but it reports on positive social outcomes evidenced by research.

## **A case for sport**

The social dimensions of sport are far-reaching and overlap with health-related phenomena like combating the social stigma associated with a disease profile of living with HIV/AIDS (Devecioglu, Ekenci, & Yildiz 2016). Social dimensions thus span a wide range of phenomena and it is difficult to identify core components for the discourses of nation-building, social cohesion and social transformation at multiple levels (Den Broeder et al. 2018).

The following section discusses issues of social cohesion, nation-building, social transformation and equity as they find meaning in post-Apartheid (after 1994) South Africa, where a democratically elected government developed policies, structures and practices to address an agenda of societal change and correcting the wrongs of the past (SRSA 2018). As political construct, nation-building mainly focuses on bridging the socio-political and class divisions, whereas social transformation underpins the agenda of social transformation and inequality based on race, gender and class. The latter agenda provides an additional focus on addressing deviant behavioural aspects associated with poverty.

## **Social cohesion**

Social cohesion is a complex process relating to the degree of social integration and the extent of inclusion to which mutual solidarity finds expression among individuals and in communities (Department of Arts & Culture 2012). In the South African context, the philosophy of *Ubuntu* translates into a heightened sense of a collective identity and teamwork in the sport domain. This philosophy gives expression to the reciprocal ethic of care

and social bonding within the sport fraternity as it entails a process that features a sense of belonging and inclusion whilst a humanist agenda focuses on solidarity and integration (Cloete & Kotze 2009).

The value of sport as a social connector (associated with *Ubuntu* philosophy) is a very powerful attribute at community level promoted by a common understanding that sport participation and club membership foster feelings of belonging and social capital expressed in relationships of trust. In some circumstances, it afforded opportunities for diverse ethnic and cultural groups to build relationships across such divisionary barriers and facilitate the development of a collective in-group identity (Walseth 2006, 447). Research in countries, such as England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Canada, shows that traditional sport club membership and community-based sport activities contribute to the creation of community life and afford marginalised individuals to become part of teams and a club environment (Skinner, Zakus, & Cowell 2008, 153). Similar findings were reported on physical education practices in South Carolina (within the United States of America) where life skills teaching aided disenfranchised youth facing depression and helplessness (Jenny & Rhodes 2017, 653). Participation in quality physical education practices reduced certain behavioural problems, created trust among students and built solidarity (Jenny & Rhodes 2017).

In a relatively large scale study in Norway, participants reported the development of meaningful friendships in voluntary sports clubs for Muslim women (Ulseth 2004, 95). Club and team membership facilitated the creation of a social home for participants with a ripple effect in the wider communities or townships of Johannesburg and Cape Town (Ogunniyi 2015, 25). Such effects emerged during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, where researchers reported positive experiences of social integration linked to a sense of emerging community pride within a small town setting (Gansbaai in the Western Cape) (Swart et al. 2011, 415). Another positive spinoff relates to community regeneration associated with infrastructure development in Stellenbosch, a town in the Western Cape Province (Cubizolles 2015, 22). The *Siyadlala* community mass participation sport project implemented from community hubs, partially overcame certain aspects of community segmentation and reduced social distances associated with power relations based on age, class and gender (Burnett & Hollander 2013). However, these positive outcomes do not change entrenched socio-political and racial divides or socio-economic layering in the long term.

In war-torn societies, SDP work leveraged positive social impacts through inter-community sport events in highly divided societies, like in Sri Lanka (Schulenkorf & Edwards 2012, 379) and Israel (Sugden 2015, 357). In the Israeli context, the Football4Peace project contributed significantly to building trust between participants, which in some small way may have a ripple effect towards peaceful co-existence of Palestinian and Jewish youth living in separate communities. Although deep-seated religious and political divides remained, some inroads were made through sport programmes that provided the space and experiences for young participants to play together and form relationships as in the case of young Protestants and Catholics in Belfast, Ireland (Sugden 1991, 59). Sport in refugee camps serve as a mechanism for in-camp bonding and integrating with youth from host-country communities, as in the case of Somali refugees building, bonding and bridging social capital in Australia (Spaaij 2012, 1519) or African refugee students in Manitoba, Canada (Kanu 2009, 114). South African literature on peace-building initiatives centres around addressing community-level violence through sport participation such as in the case of gang-violence in the Cape Flats that will be referred to in the section on social 'ills'.



**Table 2.** International and national framework for development: Implications for social impact evidence base.

SDGs and Kazan Priority Policy Areas	National Priorities as focus areas	Building a case – research themes for social impact
<b>SDG3: Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for all, at all ages</b>	<p>Strategic Goal 1: Citizens access (to) sport and recreation</p> <p>Strategic Goal 5: Sport used as a tool to support SA government and global priorities</p>	<p>Health-related issues of vulnerable populations (including stigma and marginalisation of HIV/AIDS, socio-economic vulnerability, youth and rural populations).</p>
<b>SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</b>	<p>Strategic Goal 1: Citizens access (to) sport and recreation activities</p>	<p>Social issues of inclusion and equitable access to resources, education and sport (participation, markets and leadership)</p>
<b>SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</b>	<p>Strategic Goal 2: Sport and Recreation sector adequately transformed</p>	<p>Social issues relating to women and girls' access and empowerment in and through sport</p>
<b>SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</b>	<p><b>Strategic Goal 5:</b> Sport used as a tool to support SA government and global priorities</p>	<p>Social issues relating to sport and sustainable development different levels - e.g. social cohesion, nation building, addressing violence and other social ills;</p>
<b>SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</b>	<p><b>Strategic Goal 3:</b> Enabling mechanisms to support sport and recreation</p>	<p>Social issues relating to safety, deviant behaviour (e.g. social ills such as criminal behaviour, drug abuse and violence)</p>
<b>SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusions at all levels</b>	<p><b>Strategic Goal 4:</b> Enabling mechanisms to support sport and recreation</p> <p><b>Strategic Goal 6:</b> An efficient and effective organisation</p>	<p>Social issues relating to institutional reform, good governance and equality (representation of marginal populations in decision-making and participation/engagement).</p>
<b>SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</b>	<p>Strategic Goal 3: Enabling mechanisms to support sport and recreation</p> <p><b>Strategic Goal 4:</b> Enabling mechanisms to support sport and recreation</p>	<p>Social impact relating to policy frameworks, articulation and implementation – inclusive of multi-stakeholder involvement for service delivery, resource provision, project and/or programme implementation.</p>
<b>Cross-cutting theme:</b> Promote/produce research and evidence (1.4)	<b>Cross-cutting theme</b> – underpinning strategic planning and implementation	Screening and selection of 'robust' (and relevant) evidence to build a case for the social impact of sport.



## **Nation-building**

From a socio-political viewpoint, nation building in South Africa envisages unified expressions by diverse and divided populations in a collective strive to overcome divisions of inequalities, fragmentation and exclusion. It is embedded in a national consciousness and identity of individuals that transcends social selves and other identity constructs (SRSA 2012, 412).

Nation-building includes economic, political and social transformation dimensions with sport providing a highly visible public forum in embracing new national symbols. In 1994, the newly democratically elected government in South Africa had the momentous task of bringing about diverse populations and forging a nation in which hosting major sport events was assigned a special role. The first democratically elected President, Nelson Mandela publically advocated national unity by supporting the national rugby team at the Rugby World Cup in 1995 and wore the (white) captain's jersey as symbol of reconciliation between white and black South Africans (Steenveld & Strelitz 1998). The public display of a newly designed flag, newly composed anthem and national colours worn by successful athletes placed such national symbols in the public space and made inroads in an emerging national consciousness.

Powerful nations understand the social, cultural and symbolic capital generated by hosting such events and how it creates extensive horizontal webs of interaction and relationships at community level with vertical links to the national level (Tomlinson & Young 2006). For developing economies, hosting an international event provides recognition of being a global player in the field that may attract international investments. Despite taxpayers' opposition and internal conflict, such as in the case of South Africa (2010 FIFA World Cup) and Brazil (2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games), hosting global sport events carries political meaning (Schausteck de Almeida et al. 2015). South Africa was welcomed into the influential sphere of major sporting nations by hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup and as such, demonstrated imaging effects that counter Afro-pessimism, in addition to forging an overarching national identity expressed in bouts of actions displaying a spirit of camaraderie (Haferburg 2011, 333; Pillay, Tomlinson, and Bass 2009).

In addition to the hosting of international events as a drive for national identity formation, the promotion and sharing of indigenous cultures has proven to act as prominent influences of cultural identification as evidenced in the promotion of the Gaelic Games (Ireland) (Hassan 2002, 65) and Sumo wrestling (Japan) (Chiba, Ebihara, & Morino 2001, 203). The implementation of Annual Indigenous Games Festivals in South Africa, transcended mono-cultural expressions by providing opportunities for meaningful cultural exchange and acceptance of diversity by participants from all walks of life (Maralack 2014). Such events seldom deliver society-level enduring outcomes and may carry more symbolic meaning emanating from a political agenda.

## **Social transformation**

Social transformation entails an entangled process that happens at all levels of society in demonstrating achievement towards human capital development, empowerment, equitable access to resources and opportunities, whilst ensuring the protection of human rights for all citizens to lead a life of human dignity and relative prosperity (SRSA 2017). Under

conducive circumstances, sport can reach diverse populations, including extremely marginalised groups, and affording them access to active participation. A sport and talent development model that prioritised mass participation and open access to a broad base of participation, bears evidence of the implementation and effects of a human justice framework of equality in resource distribution (Houlihan & Green 2008). South Africa's National Sport and Recreation Plan is underpinned by such a humanist framework and sets clear targets for addressing radical social transformation in and through sport (SRSA 2012). Sport can meaningfully contribute to addressing various discriminatory practices in society as supplementary intervention or strategy (De Coning 2015).

### **Equality and inclusion**

The main social issues underpinning the socio-political constructs of equality (between populations) and inclusion (of identified vulnerable populations) from a human rights perspective, relates to the persisting Apartheid legacy of social stratification based on race or ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, disability and age.

*Race and, ethnicity:* As in society, racial stereotypes are constructed in the field of sport that leads to over- and under-representation in participation numbers in certain sports and representation of positions within team sports (Floyd et al. 2014). Black and indigenous athletes are significant role models for upcoming young athletes who may aspire to a sporting career, such as Cathy Freeman (icon of the 2004 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia despite local criticism of her displaying the traditional aborigines' flag during her victory lap). Caster Semenya (Olympic Gold medallist, South Africa) is equally inspiring for contesting gender boundaries within sport and class issues being from a rural village in the Limpopo Province where people are dealing with the harsh realities of poverty and isolation. Such athletes as representatives of an ethnic minority (Cathy Freeman) or contesting the binary construction of gender (Caster Semenya), carry symbolic value displayed on a highly visible platform at international sport events to raise consciousness of different types of inequalities. Media exposure and building public persona of such athletes raise issues of discrimination on the basis of racial, gender and class stratification and has key relevance to debates within broader society.

In contemporary South Africa, social transformation policies and political strategies are mostly directed at ensuring a representative demographic composition of national teams in popular professional sports, such as rugby, cricket and football, as well as in netball (SRSA 2012). Such change is reported to be particularly slow due to multiple systemic challenges limiting racial transformation in sport (SRSA 2018).

*Socio-economic status:* According to the South African Rugby Union, R500m (about \$31 m) in 2014 was spent on addressing racial transformation in rugby, but did not make adequate inroads on the national level with only nine out of the 2015 national squad of 31 being categorised as black (Eyewitness News 2015). Children from impoverished households face various stumbling blocks to gain access to regular structured physical activities and sport. Provision of such activities at 181 MOD (Mass participation; Opportunity and access; Development and growth established) Centres, established in 2010 across the Western Cape Province, increased the participation rate to 29% (with 40,000 participants at primary and high schools), nearly triple the national average of 10% (SRSA 2017, 19;

Western Cape Government 2017). An evaluation study on this programme also reports programme effects of improved social cohesion among team members, enhanced levels of trust among participants and between them and coaches, as well as improved communication among participants (De Coning 2015, 148-149).

In 2006, an independent impact study showed that 43.7% of the community-based sport mass participation programme (*Siyadlala*) contributed to the household survival of 43.7% activity coordinators (Burnett & Hollander 2006). This is very meaningful in view of the high unemployment rate and welfare dependency of poor households where any additional income may mean that members have an improved chance of survival – not facing daily hunger or afford children to stay in school. By the end of the GIZ/YDF (Youth Development through Football) programme (2007 to 2014) implemented by the German Development Corporation (GIZ) for youth in ten different African countries, 38.2% coaches comprised mostly of unemployed youth, reported improved employability status and increased access to income generation (Burnett & Hollander 2013). This self-reported improved socio-economic status may not have sustainable effects for all in the face of a high level of unemployment in the formal economic sector and the fact that most reverted to entrepreneurial activities in the formal economic sector.

*Gender:* The IOC's (2015) report profile the advances made for girls and women in elite sport participation and leadership development, indicating that sport contributed to professional success (IOC 2015). Since 2000, there has been a significant increase of the number of women competing at consecutive Olympic Games with the most recent figures being 44% (at the 2016 London Olympic Games) and 45% (at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games) (Martin 2018).

A baseline study on gender, participation and leadership in southern Africa found a relatively high level of female sport participation (46%) with relatively lower levels in some sports like judo, basketball and athletics (33-38%), as well as in boxing and football (10-17%) (Fasting, Huffman, & Sand 2014). In South Africa, gender transformation has accelerated across multiple sports and management structures since the previous status report in 2004 (Burnett 2004), yet participation and leadership inequalities are still observed (SRSA 2017). Globally and locally, remaining barriers relate to cultural influences, lack of multiple resources, hegemonic males structures and practices from playground domination by boys of leadership positions occupied by men (Ogunniyi 2015; Saavedra 2009).

*Disability:* Around 15% of the world's population or estimated one billion people are disabled of whom 20% are from the poorest populations and 30% of this proportion, identified as homeless youths (UN 2014). In South Africa, the national disability rate is 7.5%, and is more prevalent among females compared to males (8.3% and 6.5% respectively), who faced multiple barriers, including stigma (Stats SA 2017a). Sport did much to reduce the stigma associated with disability as evidenced by the remarkable feats of Oscar Pistorius (prior to his trial and subsequent conviction) and Natalie du Toit (swimmer) (Coakley and Burnett 2014).

Since the inception of the Paralympic Games in 1948, the amazing feats of Paralympians at the Invictus Games, changed the medical model (focus on impairments) to cross into the realm of the 'normal' (Wolbring 2012, 251). The differently-abled body set its own norms and standards and became attractive events during the 2014 Glasgow and 2018 Commonwealth Games (Silva & Howe 2012, 174). The human stories of the Special Olympics and the amazing physical feats of the athletes with disabilities, including their

use of technological advancements (e.g. specially designed race chairs, and prosthetic 'blades') captured the imagination and did much for changing the perceptions around ability (Fay & Wolff 2009, 231).

*Age:* Various population surveys indicate that the level of physical activity declines with age with an average of 18% of people aged 65-74 years and about 6% for those over 75 years, according to the British Heart Foundation (Townsend et al. 2012).

Although physical activity prescriptions for older people mainly focus on health improvement, many elite sports like golf and lawn bowls attract elite athletes in this age cohort. Medical research in South Africa, mostly reports on life-time health benefits by preventing or controlling chronic diseases associated with physical inactivity. For the elderly, social support and friendship when exercising together is most valuable in combating loneliness (Joubert et al. 2007; SRSA 2009, 18). Physically active senior citizens are often a valuable asset to communities, as they have the free time to engage in community volunteer work.

### **Addressing social 'ills'**

*Crime and deviance:* Measuring the impact of crime reduction interventions is no easy feat as many programme effects are not studied scientifically (Nichols & Crow 2004, 267). In reviewing 175 sport programmes for the Australian Institute of Criminology on sport, more than 80% of the programmes focused on young people at risk of drug use or criminal behaviour, or youth already exhibiting behaviour of this type (Morris et al. 2004, 47). Positive results from these and other studies (Coalter, Allison, & Taylor 2000; Crabbe 2000, 381; Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan 2010, 294; West and Crompton 2001, 113) report that sport participation

- relieving boredom, depression and positive and enjoyable leisure activities increase;
- reducing social risk-taking through novel activities (e.g. outdoor adventure) and addresses underlying risk factors and promotes fairness, equality, social relationships (personal and social skill development) across life worlds;
- forging positive friendships and peer support;
- fostering positive youth engagement by avoiding focusing on anti-social behaviour and stereotypes.

In the USA, the Midnight Basketball is a highly effective social resource programme designed to mend the social fabric of inner city communities. During the first year, the Midnight Basketball programme: (i) reduced crime rates by 30% in the target area; (ii) created a safe haven in which participants (and the fans) could engage in positive social activities; (iii) channelled the energy of gang members in a positive direction; and (iv) significantly improved the educational and career aspirations of programme participants (Farrell et al. 1996, 91).

Impact assessments of a national mass participation programme in 2006 (*Siyadlala*), indicated reduction in soft-fabric crimes and corresponding increase in pro-social behaviour (Burnett & Hollander 2006). In the South African context, reference to such types of crimes include minor offences, such as theft without bodily harm. Reducing anti-social behaviours may include less incidences by individuals or groups of hurting others (physically and/or verbally) or destroying property (e.g. vandalism). In the same national study, the South

African Police Services reported a 15% over-all reduction in youth criminal activities over an 18-month period of programme implementation. In another South African study of the GIZ/YDF programme related to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, on-the-field violence reduced by 15% with a marked decrease in psychological violence by 29.7% for secondary school boys, ranging from 40% in the Cape Flats programme to 22.8% in an Orange Farm project (Burnett & Hollander 2013). AMANDLA Edufootball's Safe-Hub model that reaches up to 1,500 children and youth weekly in Khayelitsha (Western Cape), reported a decline of between 28.6% and 37.1% of various categories of criminal incidents (De Coning 2015, 154).

## Conclusion

A case for sport is a vehicle for selecting robust research findings on the positive social outcomes of different manifestations of sport – from individual and collective participation to hosting local or mega sport events. The selection of studies and supportive arguments feature a political agenda for harnessing the evidence to mobilise stakeholder engagement and resources for policy, structural and pragmatic reforms within a human justice framework. In a critical analysis of research, it becomes clear that some social outcomes are difficult to measure, whereas measurable outcomes may not speak to political agenda-setting such as in the case of nation-building (Evans et al. 2015). The selective reporting of research findings may provide a skew or bias view and not feature the negative aspects associated with competitive sport and associated deviant or exclusive practices at all levels – from the global to community-based institutions.

This paper is about building a case for sport and the research evidence support this whilst holding some key lessons for the South African government sector. Sport programme assessments should be mandated and funded as to generate robust research showing what mechanisms and circumstances meaningfully contribute to good practices and delivering on intended social outcomes. Ensuring policy coherence to deliver on strategic outcomes across national-level stakeholders (horizontal connectivity) in articulation with global agencies (e.g. IOC, international federations and UN sector constituting vertical articulation) would create the policy space for impactful practices. The challenge lies in implementing policies and monitor practices so as to close the loop for learning. The government sector has an important role to play in equitable resource distribution, provide leadership and forge partnerships that could deliver on a socio-political agenda through sport.

## Note

1. SRSA, 'A case for sport and recreation. The social and economic value of sport'.

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