

Craig, P. J., Barcelona, B., Aytur, S., Amato, J., & Young, S. J. (2019). Using Inclusive Sport for Social Change in Malawi, Africa. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 53(3), 244-263.

What is it about? (Aim/objectives)

The effects of the YES-Africa (Youth Enrichment through Sport) Malawi Exchange programme as part of five sub-Saharan countries funded by the US Department of State. The programme build capacity by training key sport leaders in Malawi to advocate for inclusion, overcome barriers and use existing resources more effectively to improve conditions for youth with disabilities and include them in sport participation.

Where is it from? (Context/location)

Collaboration between the University of New Hampshire and individuals in Malawi.

Who are involved? (Research participants)

70 teachers, public health officials, volunteers, athletes (youth 18 years and older with disabilities), physiotherapists and coaches.

What are the readings and main concepts?

Social change is possible through sport – evidence shows sport participation builds capacity, addresses stigma and brings awareness and acceptance through mutual and understanding for youth with disabilities.

Socio-ecological model of inclusive sport in Malawi, Africa to explain how individuals change in behaviour spreads from the micro-level outwards and are influenced by different systems:

- Micro-system – the child or youth's interpersonal relationships (e.g. at home or school) and social supports.
- Meso-system – local community resources.
- Macro-system – national and international legislation and policies, as well as governance structures.
- Exo-system – physical resources (e.g. community), training institutions and communication.

What are the main findings? (Results)

- Malawi has a positive national legislative and policy framework to address inequalities and equalising opportunities in different sectors for people with disabilities.
 - This should protect the rights of 3.8% of the population of which 2.4% are children or youth.
 - Monitoring and evaluation is not in place and different stakeholders do not collaborate to programmes exist parallel and waste resources.
- More women than men are involved in disability work and it is difficult to recruit volunteers, as most people do not have enough income or resources to work without payment.
- Barriers constrain implementation that relate to conditions of poverty and discriminatory practices.
- Themes identified in Malawi, include:
 - Cultural beliefs and social perceptions (devalued and stigmatised as 'not normal') that constrain youth with disabilities, but attitudes are slowly changing for the better.
 - There is limited access for youth to access to public spaces like schools and sport facilities.
 - Barriers and socio-environmental factors constrain providers of inclusive sport for youth with disabilities (e.g. lack of equipment, finances, coaches who can adapt activities, transport, programme coordination and networking).

What are the main lessons? (Discussion/Reflections/Learnings)

Many instructors, leaders and youth are not aware of existing legislation and policies, including their 'rights'.

Existing barriers are well documented, but difficult to change. Change at the personal level rests with mutual respect, compassion and understanding. Activism and consultation with management can address discriminatory practices and accessibility of places and (safe) spaces.

Is it useful? (Chat room, knowledge sharing)

How do you go about changing the stigma directed towards people with disabilities?

How can your organisation contribute to include youth with disabilities in sport participation and/or advocate for positive change?