International Sport for Change Programme Strategy 2010-12

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sport for Change, often referred to as ‘sport-for-development’, is a relatively young, yet rapidly growing field. Sport has long been recognised as having the potential to play a role in society with intrinsic benefits in terms of physical health and emotional well being, and the ability to contribute to issues such as crime prevention and increased educational attainment. Historically, Comic Relief has funded a range of sports-based programmes. However, we continue to recognise that there is a lack of evidence to support many of the claims made about sport’s contribution to achieving outcomes associated with more traditional international development programmes.

The Sport for Change programme aims to demonstrate our continuing commitment to investing in the sector. It also provides an opportunity to support further learning about the impact of sport programmes, particularly what works and what doesn’t when targeting specific groups of children and young people. We want Comic Relief’s funding to support the delivery of projects, as well as investing in ‘sport-for-development’ and ‘development’ organisations. We believe this will help to improving the sharing of best practice in the design, delivery and monitoring of programmes, and ultimately lead to more effective sporting interventions that are able to clearly demonstrate their contribution to bringing about a positive and lasting change in the lives of poor and disadvantaged children and young people.

2. WHY SPORT FOR CHANGE

Background

Internationally, the link between sport and human development started with the Olympic movement in the early 20th century. However, it was only from the late 1990s that governments, UN agencies and NGOs started to employ sport more systematically in order to achieve social development outcomes. Now participation in sport is defined as a human right and it is increasingly used as a tool in programmes addressing issues such as HIV and AIDS, women and girls’ empowerment and conflict resolution. The FIFA 2010 World Cup in South Africa has also linked sport with the international development agenda, providing a global platform for awareness-raising and the development of programmes designed to leave a positive social legacy. Building on this, the hosts of major international sporting events are now including a social development legacy in their plans, with many Governments and international and national sports bodies promising to deliver more than just increased participation in sports.

Within the NGO sector, Sport for Change programmes are generally being delivered in one of two ways: by organisations for whom sport is a central priority and the mechanism for achieving additional development outcomes; or by more development-oriented organisations who use sport as one of a range of approaches to deliver their goals. As the profile of sport grows, so does the need for these two types of organisations to work together more closely to share good practice to ensure the delivery of quality sporting interventions that will achieve the desired development outcomes.
Global Commitments

Millennium Development Goals

In September 2003 a report by the United Nations, *Sport for Development and Peace: Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, concluded that sport ‘contributes to the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. It is an innovative and effective tool to assist existing efforts to achieve specific targets such as those concerning education, gender equality, HIV/AIDS and the reduction of major diseases. More broadly, well-designed sports programmes are also a cost-effective way to contribute significantly to health, education, development and peace and a powerful medium through which to mobilize societies as well as communicate key messages.’

Other Significant International Instruments

The 1978 UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education and Sport specifies that every human being has a right of access to physical education and that sport is essential for the full development of his or her personality.

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child calls on all state parties actively to promote the right to play.

The African Union has drafted a Sport Policy Framework for Africa (2008-2018) seeking to support the vision of the African Union, particularly with regard to integration and peace building, and economic, social and cultural development.

Global Response

Since 2003 the UN has adopted a number of general resolutions on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace, declaring 2005 the ‘International Year of Sports and Physical Education’, involving 120 countries in sport activities and launching more than 100 new projects to promote the use of sport in development. In addition, a series of world conferences have taken place. Magglingen (2003, 2005) was the first international, high-level event on sport and development, involving participants from sports federations, governments, UN agencies, the media, athletes, business and civil society. Next Step (2003, 2005, 2007) was then established to target practitioners, mostly at the grassroots level, to share experiences and best practice from the field. At the same time, the ‘Women in Sport’ movement organised a parallel series of world conferences, exploring the involvement of women in sport.

In 2001 the United Nations appointed Adolf Ogi as the first Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, a role continued by Wilfred Lemke from 2008. This was followed in 2004 with the establishment of the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDP IWG), convened to articulate and promote policy recommendations to governments for the integration of sport and physical activity into their domestic and international development strategies and programmes. The final report, *Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments* was delivered in 2008, focusing on the evidence and recommendations for the contribution of sport to drive development goals forward.

How does Comic Relief fit in?

Sport for Change is a new programme within the Comic Relief International Grants Strategy 2008-2012 and an integral part of our overall Sport Relief strategy. We want to support organisations to use sports in a variety of ways to help achieve positive change in poor and disadvantaged people’s lives, i.e. not funding sport or sports development for its own sake but as part of a wider remit for development. We also acknowledge that, being a young field, there is a great amount of learning and development required within the sector and we believe that we can add value as an experienced and knowledgeable grant maker by working with a range of ‘sport-for-development’ and ‘development’ partners, bridging the gap between the two sectors, investing in learning and ultimately increasing the quality and effectiveness of sport-based development programmes.
How the Sport for Change strategy was developed

The Sport for Change strategy is based on our experience of funding a range of sport projects since 2002, our own learning about those projects and wider learning from the sector. In 2007, Comic Relief initiated an action research programme to understand better how, and in what circumstances, sport can help to make a difference to the lives of disadvantaged young people. At the same time we undertook a literature review, examining the link between sport and development in the UK and internationally. The review found that sport does have the potential to make a valuable contribution to development, where it is part of a broader programme of change that follows community development principles, but that the evidence base to support many of the claims made is lacking. Although the sport research is ongoing, findings from both of these pieces of work have contributed to the development of this strategy and will continue to inform our grant making and learning practices for sport.

3. WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

Our goal is to enable organisations to use sport\(^1\) effectively as tool for bringing about a lasting positive change in the lives of children and young people.

How does Comic Relief believe this change can happen?

Comic Relief believes that sport can be a valuable tool in tackling poverty and injustice. However, we also realise that poor and disadvantaged people often have complex needs and problems which sport alone cannot address. Some sports initiatives have modest goals, focusing on the short-term opportunities to increase participation, create fun, develop sport skills and engage in activities to improve physical and emotional well being. We believe, however, that sport must always be used as part of a wider programme of development that identifies and addresses root causes, aims for clear outcomes and focuses on long term solutions.

Current research shows that it is not ‘sport’ itself that brings about change, instead it is the set of processes and relationships used to deliver and support the sporting intervention that are fundamental to achieving development goals. In order for a sports programme to create a positive motivational, or ‘mastery’\(^2\), climate that is developmental both in terms of delivery and outcomes, the following ‘processes’ are essential: affirmation and praise for effort and improvement; the engagement of relevant role-models from the community; and an environment of cooperative learning where everyone plays an important role. This is supported by the concept of ‘protective factors’\(^3\) that reduce the engagement in harmful or anti-social behaviour, including: close contact with a caring adult; opportunities for group interaction; providing a ‘safe space’ to spend time in a positive way; and valuing achievement. The role of the ‘coach’\(^4\) is fundamental to supporting these models, being the primary point of contact between participants and the programmes. As such, it is necessary that they are carefully recruited, appropriately trained and show qualities such as empathy, care, humour and flexibility, as well as sports skills. We believe that programmes based on these models will have the greatest chance of bringing about lasting and positive change.

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1 Incorporated into our definition of ‘sport’ are all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. Such as: play; recreation; organized, casual or competitive sport; and indigenous sports or games.


4 A ‘coach’ refers to any individual qualified or unqualified, voluntary or waged, who directly leads the delivery of sport activities and is the first point of contact for children and young people participating in those activities. This may include activity leaders and Peer Leaders.
Our starting point will always be people, their needs and aspirations for change, and supporting the most appropriate means for bringing about that change based on learning and evidence. We believe that when planning, implementing and reviewing, Sport for Change projects need to take account of the following in order to bring about the desired changes:

### Outcomes

Comic Relief wants to know that the projects we are funding are bringing about changes in the lives of poor and disadvantaged people. We call these changes programme level outcomes, and define them as the ‘intended or unintended effects or changes to people’s lives that happen as a result of the project or organisation’s activities’.

During the period covered by this strategy, we anticipate that the lives of children and young people will be transformed through the following outcomes:

- **Children and young people have increased self-efficacy**, resulting in the desire, willingness and ability to make the best personal life choices, take advantage of education and other opportunities and participate in decision making process that affect their lives.

- **Children and young people’s uptake of services (particularly health and education services) is increased and results in improved health and educational attainment**.

- **Marginalised groups experience a measurable reduction in stigma and discrimination resulting in increased understanding and their inclusion into family and community life**.

- **Children and young people employ and experience less violent behaviour leading to safer environments for themselves, their families and their communities**.

- **Organisations use sport more effectively in their work and are measurably more effective in demonstrating lasting positive changes in the lives of vulnerable children and young people**.

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5 Self-efficacy is the individual’s belief in their capability to influence and take action in events that affect their lives. The three recognized components are initiative, effort and persistence, which are developed through a process of skill building delivered within a cooperative learning environment.
Geographical Focus

The Sport for Change Strategy will have a strong focus on Africa and Latin America (Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras) but will also fund projects in the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka). We will consider work supporting outside of these named regions and countries if they are particularly innovative or represent an opportunity to inform our learning across the grants portfolio.

Target Group

The focus of the Sport for Change programme is children and young people, linking directly with target groups across the six existing Comic Relief programme areas, in particular those affected by conflict, street and working children, women and girls and people affected by HIV. We will also encourage applications that aim to work with the hardest to reach and marginalised groups such as girls and disabled children and young people.

4. UNDERSTANDING WHAT WE’VE ACHIEVED AND HOW WE ACHIEVED IT

Understanding what difference we have made

We want to be able to tell the public what difference our funding has made in each grant-making programme, both in terms of individual stories of change and on a more systematic and aggregated basis. We want to be able to say who we have helped, how many have benefited and in what kinds of ways. We want to understand the extent to which our programmes have brought about lasting changes in the lives of those directly benefiting, as well as changes in policy.

We will ask grantees to provide information on progress towards their project outcomes on an annual basis, at the end of the grant period and through external evaluations, using outcomes and indicators that they agree with us at the start of the project.

Understanding how we made a difference

We are also committed to learning from the work that we fund, so we can understand not only what difference we have made, but how changes to people’s lives happen. For example we want to test out our assumptions about the key factors that create change for our target groups, and find out which approaches or methodologies work better than others in different contexts. We also want to know which types of local organisations are most effective in supporting change for different groups in a variety of contexts, and how relationships between, and inputs from, partner organisations and other stakeholders, including Comic Relief, help or hinder the delivery of change. Some crosscutting issues that we are also interested in include education, disability and gender.

Alongside these broad questions above, which we will explore through all the work that we fund, we have developed specific learning questions for each programme to help us gain more in-depth understanding of some of the assumptions underpinning our work in different contexts. For the Sport for Change programme these are:
**Learning Questions**

**What are the conditions needed for participants to transfer the skills learnt and self-efficacy acquired through the sporting intervention in order to effect change in other areas of their lives?**

It is assumed that sports programmes can build self-efficacy and that this, along with skill development and the provision of information in any thematic area, will lead to behaviour change and the ability to take positive action in terms of health, education, employment and in the community. This is particularly the case for HIV and gender empowerment programmes. There is, however, little evidence to support this assumption. We are keen to understand what conditions are therefore required to take what is learnt on the field of play beyond the touchline.

**What are the key elements of the interaction between coaches and participants in specific groups and in different contexts that are crucial for bringing about lasting change?**

In sports programmes the coach is often the primary point of contact for participants and the only adult with whom they feel able to build a trusting relationship. The role of the coach is therefore fundamental in ensuring an enabling and protective environment for participants. As no two groups or contexts are the same, we are interested to better understand the capabilities required by a coach in order to meet the specific needs and priorities of the target group.

**What is the added value for development organisations in integrating sport across their existing areas of work?**

For organisations that use sport as one of a range of approaches to achieve their goals, we are particularly interested in understanding how, and to what extent, sport has been successful in delivering particular changes where other tools have failed.

**What are the most effective ways of adapting particular sporting interventions to address the needs of specific groups in different contexts?**

Our theory of change asserts that it is not ‘sport’ that brings about change but instead it is the set of processes used to deliver the sporting intervention that are important. We are interested to understand what differentiated uses of sport and models for delivery are most effective for a different target groups.

**Learning Activities**

We want to take every opportunity to collect the evidence needed to address these learning questions. We expect most Comic Relief grantees to address some of these learning questions in their work. Annual reports will ask for any evidence grantees may have collected over the year in relation to any of the learning questions, either through systematic research or more anecdotal reflection by staff. We also expect externally commissioned evaluations to address any learning questions relevant to the project. Comic Relief visits to projects, and discussions with staff and those benefiting from the project will also provide important insights into the issues raised by the learning questions. Projects can include funding for action research in relation to one or more learning questions above, either at application stage, or through top-up funding over the life of the grant. We may also commission independent research, including literature reviews to get an overview of existing evidence. We are also interested in making links between the ‘development’ and ‘sport-for-development’ sectors, bringing together practitioners to share approaches and best practice. Additionally, we will engage researchers and academics from both sectors to develop more evidence about the effective ways of using sport in programmes that are primarily development-oriented.

We will share what we learn through dedicated reports, ongoing learning meetings both in the UK and overseas with grantees and other donors, and online learning environments. Above all we are committed to applying what we learn, in order to help our grantees deliver change more effectively; to improve our policies and processes, and our performance as a grant-maker; and to support our advocacy and public education work.
Types of Grant

‘Project’ grants. These may be up to £300,000 over 3 years. Organisations are strongly advised to submit applications that are commensurate with their size and capacity, the size and capacity of their local partners, and their track record to date.

‘Tactical planning’ grants. These may be of up to £25,000 over 1 year for baseline studies, needs analysis, piloting work, action research and related work that enables applicant organisations to develop a well thought through proposal. Based on experience and learning, we recognise that certain gaps exist in terms of planning and monitoring Sport for Change programmes and would encourage organisations to think about the following when applying for a research, consultation and planning grant:

- Understanding the context, identifying specific target groups and programming according to their particular needs and priorities
- Support in the design and development of appropriate sporting interventions, particularly for organisations who wish to use sport as one of a range of approaches
- The development of appropriate monitoring systems that will demonstrate the change brought about through the sporting intervention and its contribution to wider organisational goals

We may employ other grant models in exceptional circumstances and on an invitation only basis.