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The International Platform on Sport and Development

The future of sport and development

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Reimagining the future of sport and development

At the beginning of January 2020, the international media began to break news of a “[mystery_pneumonia-like_illness](#)” detected in Wuhan, China. Soon after, it was identified as a form of coronavirus and named COVID-19. The virus spread, infecting tens of thousands of the city’s residents within weeks. On 23 January, the authorities imposed a lockdown in a bid to curb the infection rate.

While media images of overwhelmed hospitals and deserted streets in one of China’s largest cities were shocking, few of us predicted what would come next. Country after country announced their first cases, and on 11 March the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic.

Countries as far apart as Fiji and the Philippines and Greece and Guatemala declared national lockdowns. People were no longer able to socialise and continue life as they knew it. Many institutions including schools, offices, shops, entertainment venues and sporting institutions and structures closed. Millions became unable to work and livelihoods have since been severely threatened.

But the pandemic has not affected us all equally. People on low incomes and ethnic minorities are more likely to lose their jobs, more likely to contract the virus and more likely to die from it.

Women have also been at risk, disproportionately represented in industries that are declining the most, while domestic violence has risen and access to sexual and reproductive health services has fallen dramatically.

Other vulnerable groups such as refugees and people with disabilities have also been severely affected. As the United Nations Development Fund [says](#), “While coronavirus has respected no national borders, it will continue to discriminate against the most vulnerable.”

And the pandemic has not affected sport equally. It has had an unprecedented impact on elite sport, with the world’s headline tournaments being cancelled or postponed, but community sports clubs and sport for development organisations, especially those with limited resources, fear for their survival. Furthermore, people with smaller housing, no gardens, limited access to technology and more restrictive lockdowns remain less able to be physically active or play sport.

Despite the challenges, the situation has also created the opportunity to reflect. On 6 April 2020, the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, sportanddev Senior Consultant Ben Sanders wrote an article entitled “[Is it time for sport to change?](#)”

In it, he noted the vast inequities that existed in sport prior to the pandemic. A professional athlete can earn multiple times the average salary, while many vulnerable groups do not even have access to sport despite it being regarded as a fundamental right. Yet, there is increasing evidence of sport's ability to contribute to communities and address global challenges. Now is the time to ensure sport better serves society, he argued.

sportanddev received a lot of feedback on the article. So we opened up the discussion and launched a call for articles in April 2020. This was followed by a June 23 webinar on 'Reimagining the future of sport and development' (the recording of the webinar is [here](#)).

This report summarises the main points from our call for articles and webinar, which both elicited a huge response.

While we cannot claim to represent the entire sport for development sector, the report collates ideas from multiple people and organisations.

Participants contributed from more than 30 countries in six continents. They come from NGOs, governments, intergovernmental organisations, sports federations and clubs. They work on a range of topics, from gender equality and health to education and peacebuilding.

The pages that follow can be seen as a series of recommendations that are crowdsourced from our community. We hope the report serves as food for thought for sports leaders, policymakers and anyone else with the ability to influence change as we aim to #BuildBackBetter in the coming years.



Call for articles

Sport must change. This was true before coronavirus and will still be true well after.

– SchweryCade

As the coronavirus pandemic has profoundly affected sport, including professional leagues and competitions, many have begun to question the role of sport in society. Should we be seeking to go back to business as usual? Is this even possible? Or is it time for sport to change to better serve all in society? What needs to be done?

We launched a call for articles on the future of sport and development, linked to the future of sport itself. We encouraged submissions on a range of issues, such as:

- Does sport need to change to better serve society? If so, how and why?
- What can sport and development actors do better in the future?
- How can sport play a greater role in contributing to development and peace?
- Can we reimagine the role of sport? Do other realistic utopias exist for sport?
- Can we resolve the conflict and contradictions inherent within sport? If so, how?

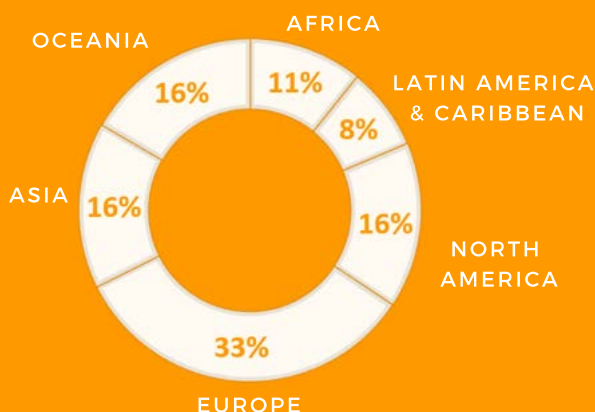
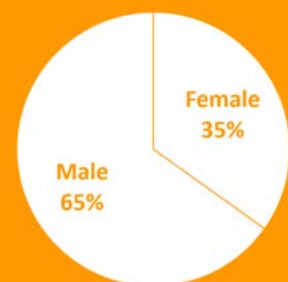
[Read the articles on the future of sport and development.](#)

Articles focused on the need to reimagine the role of sport and sport for development, and #buildbackbetter during and after the COVID-19 crisis. Below we have provided a snapshot of common themes from the 55 articles.



55 articles received and published (in English and French), from academia and public, private and non-profit sectors

65 authors, including practitioners, academics, students, policymakers, consultants and others



Articles from around the world

① Build a more equitable and inclusive sport for development and sport sector



To emerge stronger from this crisis, it is necessary to acknowledge and address the inherent inequalities in sports that discriminate on the basis of body, gender, sexuality, age, ability, caste, race, tribe, location class and religion.

- Madhumita Das and Sanjana Gaiind, activists, rights advocates & consultants

One article argued that sport and the coronavirus have one thing in common: they are both sometimes described as a 'great leveller.' Some say coronavirus affects us all equally, regardless of rank, religion, race, financial status and other characteristics, and people also argue those things also don't matter on the sports field.

But this is not the case as we outlined above. The poor and marginalised are most at risk during the COVID-19 crisis, and they are also most likely to be left behind in sport.

Authors emphasised the need to challenge the current inequities within the sport for development and sport sectors. The crisis means resources are constrained, and they will be for some time. We need to ensure this doesn't lead to previous gains (e.g. in relation to women's sport and equity) being reversed.

Women Win outlined six critical actions to make sport for development both relevant globally and more equitable, inclusive and responsive to local needs.

② Investing in grassroots sport and sport for development



The pandemic provides a unique opportunity to re-evaluate the community sport sector as a whole, review support and investment models, and innovate to open up sport participation and its associated benefits to a much broader section of the community.

– Ruth Jeanes and co., Monash University, Edith Cowan University, Victoria University and University of Amsterdam

Writers repeatedly emphasised the need for sport to go 'back to its roots'. This includes investing more funding in grassroots sport and sport for development initiatives that provide access and opportunities for all. When doing so, it is important to pay special attention to marginalised groups such as women and girls, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and gender non-conforming individuals.

Authors highlighted the need to invest in building the capacity of sport for development organisations and local sport actors, including

community coaches. Articles also emphasised the need to develop the skills and competencies of youth. Contributors called for greater recognition of informal sport's potential to promote inclusion and to build stronger, thriving and interconnected communities.

One article also highlighted the role of indigenous games in contributing to the COVID-19 recovery. These are traditional recreational activities that originate in a particular cultural group or community. They exist in many countries – including India and South Africa – but are often marginalised by mainstream sport.

③ The need to change elite sport



For the world of sport to return to the no-compromise, over-funded, over-resourced pursuit of perfection that has become the aspirational modus operandi for sports organisations in the 'developed world' seems at best misguided, at worst a little vulgar.

– Tim Harper, Equity Sport

Responses included critiques of an excessive focus on elite sport and performance. Resources are disproportionately allocated to professional sport and their associated rewards.

Certain authors argued that elite sport does not adequately serve the needs of society and reinforces inequities.

Sport bodies need to improve their governance, transparency and leadership, with a focus on sustainability and social responsibility.

This may help rebuild trust in sport, which has often been seen as self-serving, disjointed and driven by profit rather than people and planet.

④ Focusing on people and communities - not sport itself



Sport, as a human, social phenomenon is irreplaceable. So why are we not talking about this more? Why are we not priming ourselves to create a future that embraces more of the assets of sport that go beyond the charts and spreadsheets in the sports industry?

– Marjorie Enya, International Olympic Academy and Brazilian Rugby Union

A common theme was the need to prioritise policies and programmes that focus on developing individuals and communities through sport rather than the sport itself.

While there are overlaps between development through sport and the development of sport, it is important to acknowledge the different focus and ensure that community needs are prioritised. A bottom-up approach to sport and sport for development is necessary to level the playing field.

If we truly intend to prioritise development through sport then it

is time to change the way we view and celebrate sport. Sport should not only be taken seriously when the sport itself is serious (i.e. elite, competitive and performance-based). Grassroots sport and sport for development remain just as important, reminding us that after all sport is human.

The elite sport industry may have been on pause, but this did not and does not mean sport and physical activity have stopped altogether. In fact, it emphasises the fact that sport for development activities are as critical and important as ever.

⑤ Uniting different approaches and actors



Now is our time to seek out a better future for individuals and the planet as a whole. By embracing the UN's 2030 Agenda and using the SDGs as a compass for sporting programmes and policy development, all stakeholders have an opportunity to contribute to this positive momentum.

– Sophie Spink and Mark Abberley, Portas Consulting

While there is value in recognising the distinctions between different forms of sport, writers also argued that integrating sport for development, sport for all and elite sport as a united sector would contribute more effectively to sport playing a role in development, including contributing deeply to the SDGs as a collective framework.

This relates to a broader issue. Should sport for development consider itself a separate sector?

Or is it rather a methodology and approach that uses sport as a vehicle to promote outcomes beyond the playing field?

Greater links between sport for development actors, traditional sport structures such as federations, the public sector and development institutions are needed to make such approaches more widely used and accepted.

⑥ Making gender equality the priority



My hope [...] is that the sport for development movement will see tackling this issue as not only as an opportunity for us but ultimately as a priority. I hope we will step up to the responsibility of teaching the largest demographic that plays sport [adolescent boys] about how we can live in peaceful and safe societies not just for men, but for all.

– Jon Hamilton, Inspire Football Foundation

Women and girls are particularly at risk during and after the current crisis. One article pointed out that the structures that control women have strengthened during lockdowns, leaving them vulnerable.

Domestic violence has increased, and sex education, contraceptives, safe abortions and other reproductive health services are restricted. COVID-19 lockdowns are likely to lead to millions of unintended pregnancies, according to the United Nations Population Fund.

Writers emphasised that steps need

to be taken to prevent gender-based violence and ensure previous progress on gender equality is not lost. They argued that sport needs to play a transformative role in tackling gender stereotypes and promoting equality.

They also urged men to play a greater role in promoting gender equality and preventing abuse of women. Adolescent males are the demographic that plays sport the most in many countries. Sport can therefore be particularly useful for educating boys about violence prevention and women's rights.

7 Adapting and considering new delivery models



Demand for sport will not decrease; how we deliver sport will be the question.

– **Professor Hans Westerbeek, Victoria University**

In-person interactions are at the heart of most sport for development programmes, but the current crisis has hampered them significantly. Sport for development organisations and individuals need to continue to adapt and innovate, considering new approaches.

This includes using technology and social media to increase the reach and impact of sport for development work. We need to take a broader view of sport, beyond physical and competitive activities.

Board games and other intellectual recreational pursuits have shown positive effects on cognitive capacity and health. Greater consideration of the role of e-sports is also merited.

Furthermore, it is clear that sport and sport for development need to be better prepared for disasters and emergencies. This should include better planning to guide relief, response and recovery efforts.

⑧ Using sport to tackle mental health problems and trauma



This is sport's moment to heal. Never in its history have we seen a time when sport is more needed.

- Lou Bergholz, Edgework Consulting

With so much attention on physical health and economic recovery, there is a risk that the COVID-19 response will not focus enough attention on mental health. The crisis is exacerbating mental health problems, especially among vulnerable groups.

International development actors often underestimate the importance of psychosocial support programmes, and they can be hesitant to support such work as they view its impact as difficult to measure.

But sport can play a critical role in healing, using trauma-informed approaches to promote mental health and recovery. The therapeutic benefits of sport will be especially important after the COVID-19 crisis.

And the crisis does not necessarily make sport and play activities impossible. Some approaches and games can be used without breaking physical distancing guidelines, which means it is still possible to run psychosocial support programmes.

⑨ Investing in teaching, learning and research



Educating our youth on how sport can enhance and affect the body, the mind, relationships and communities can truly transform the thinking of the new generation.

– Rhonda Clarke-Goden, University of Trinidad and Tobago

Teaching, learning and research remain important fundamentals to educate and sustain the sport for development movement. Making sport for development more prominent within educational institutions can enable new leaders in this field to emerge. After all, students represent the future and need to be critically engaged.

There should be more sport degrees, educational seminars, life skills workshops and community breakout sessions.

Combining coursework with opportunities for internships and fellowships is vital. Partnerships between scholars and practitioners may help to bridge gaps between theory, policy and practice.

Greater connections between sport and academia may broaden the use of sport in education, while using science and approaches from elite sport can help us better measure and understand the impact of sport for development.

10 Turning challenges into opportunities



The future should be bright for those in sport for development who have risen to the occasion and offered a pathway and leadership for others to follow to really show the true worth of sport to the community.

– **George Halkias, Street Soccer Movement & Big Issue Community Street Soccer Program**

The current crisis presents challenges and opportunities. A global economic recession will mean even more limited resources, including among sport bodies and funders. Things may well get worse for the sport for development sector. As Lauren Schwaar says: “The real possibility exists that an event as cataclysmic as COVID-19 could create an even wider schism between established high-level sport and emerging sport due to depleted resources.”

The reality is that the future of sport for development may be at stake,

especially for smaller and less well-resourced actors who may struggle to adapt and survive.

This could consolidate power and resources in the hands of a few, reinforcing current inequities in the global sport ecosystem. To combat this, sport for development actors need to mobilise to ensure that their actions are seen as critical in the relief, response and recovery efforts – and beyond. This requires greater commitment from donors, partners and governments.

In this regard, we welcome the

creation of a Sport for Good Relief fund by Laureus and other partners.

On the other hand, this crisis presents an opportunity for the sport for development sector to increase its profile. While elite sport has generally been on pause, many sport for development organisations are directly involved in relief efforts. These actors have innovated and adapted their programming, and they continue to engage communities. This marks an opportunity to gain greater recognition and visibility, illustrate the value of sport for development policies and programmes, and promote the widespread use of such approaches.

In fact, there may be positive outcomes that emerge from this crisis. These include the localisation of sport and physical activity, and trends such as regular home exercise that may continue beyond the pandemic and provide a means for communities to be more physically active, engaged and healthy.

Whatever the case, it is clear that sport for development needs to plan and mobilise for a 'new normal' - there is no going back to business as usual, and reducing risks and enhancing opportunities is urgently required.



Webinar - reimagining the future of sport and development



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Reimagining the future of sport and development

Moderators:

- Eli Wolff, Power of Sport Lab
- Marion Keim, Foundation for Sport, Development & Peace

Introduction:

- Ben Sanders, sportanddev

Panel discussion:

- Rekha Dey, Sport for development specialist
- Ollie Dudfield, Commonwealth Secretariat
- Maria Bobenrieth, Women Win
- Warren Lucas, Youth leader in sport for development
- Ben Howard, Pacific Sports Partnerships, GHD

Q & A

Thanks and next steps

On 23 June 2020, International Olympic Day, sportanddev hosted a webinar on 'Reimagining the future of sport and development'. Five panellists shared their visions and insights while more than 1,000 people tuned in on Zoom, Facebook and YouTube.

Eli Wolff from the Power of Sport Lab and Professor Marion Keim from the Foundation for Sport, Development and Peace moderated. A summary of the presentations from the five panellists is below.

View a recording of the webinar [here](#).

Focusing on indigenous sports and sport for employment



Rekha Dey

Founder

Rekha Dey and Associates

Rekha Dey has been supporting the growth of the sport for development sector in India for the last 15 years. Opening the webinar panel discussion, she said “when sport is played for competition and for winning it has [one] meaning, and when it is played at the grassroots level for a variety of life skills like education, it has a different meaning altogether.”

In comparing the two, she called for a shift from the elite mindset to one of promoting sport for all by focusing on indigenous sports, which are abundant in India. For any kind of change to happen, access to sport needs to improve, and that will help communities reach development goals.

With increased access, “this [COVID-19] is also a time when we can give a lot of importance to skills where employment is generated, and more and more people participate.”

Dey argued that gathering data, building competency frameworks, and improving guidelines for the sport for development sector are needed for this shift to happen. There is a need to build a sustainable ecosystem where job seekers and job providers can come together. This should include training organisations and their corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments in order to familiarise them with sport for development programmes.

Highlighting a key example of a promising practice, Rekha mentioned the European Union-funded CHANGE project. The aim of this is to define the skills and competencies of those working in the sport for development sector.



She argued that “as the global [sport for development] community grows, there will be a time when people will be convinced about the power of sport for development and we can bring in structured and organised training and education within sport for development as well.”

To end her presentation, Dey highlighted the need to properly describe the specific roles that exist or should exist within sport for development. Being able to properly articulate job roles and why they are needed is important in order to push for more employment opportunities to be created. This can help when advocating for sport for development with policymakers and promoting employment opportunities in the sector.

Scale, digitalisation and rights: Three questions in reimagining the role of sport for development



Oliver Dudfield
Head of Sport for Development
Commonwealth Secretariat

Beginning his presentation by paying respects to the land of the indigenous people he grew up on in Australia, Oliver Dudfield emphasised the need to confront racism, discrimination and inequality globally. He took this idea of tradition further by weaving together the ideas from a popular dreamtime story of Tiddalick the Frog.

Tiddalick woke up one day with a huge thirst. He drank until there was no water left in the world. Soon, animals and trees were dying. The animals collectively came up a solution: if they could make Tiddalick laugh, the water would flow from his mouth and fill the rivers. They tried and tried but were not successful. But then an eel danced, twisting his body into knots and contortions. Finally, Tiddalick laughed, and water gushed from his mouth.

Dudfield explained the significance of the story to him: “Tiddalick is a story of a community that had a problem at scale, rooted in inequality and the unequal distribution of resources. But the community took a collective approach to solving these problems at scale and in the end there was an innovative solution from outside the core of the traditional leadership whose contribution was key to addressing this issue.”

Similarly, the sport for development sector is addressing issues at scale – and the Commonwealth has been advocating for sport to be used to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Most available data is local and for individual programmes, and “the type of change and impact that can be measured at scale is different to what can be measured through targeted sustainable interventions.”

There is a trade-off to this, however. Sport for development programmes need to both improve access through more resources and be sustained through community-driven and context-specific action, Dudfield argued. We need to look at collective impact at different levels.

Statistics indicate a lack of diversity in sports leadership – including on criteria like gender, race and disability. If we were to examine the leadership of sport for development, we would likely find the same thing.

We should use the pandemic to address this issue and improve access to sport and sport for development. Dudfield argued that “a traditionally under-represented group in governance is more likely to participate and join in more when the system is fundamentally shut down.” Digitalisation and improving access to digital communication can reduce inequality.

As a result of COVID-19, we have seen increased access to digital approaches – although it isn’t a panacea since access to the internet is low in some places and the potential for abuse is high. The free online course on sport and development offered by the Commonwealth, the Australian government and sportanddev is one example that addresses some key issues in the sector.



No regret moves in reimagining the great correction for S4D

Maria Bobenrieth
Executive Director
Women Win



COVID-19 has created challenges worldwide, with countries and communities needing to adapt to a health crisis and economic recession. Many sport for development programmes have moved online and organisations are worried about their financial sustainability.

However, it also creates the opportunity to change, as Maria Bobenrieth, Executive Director of Women Win, highlighted during her presentation:

“In the spirit of the human rights efforts that are going forward and the bravery of this young generation who are willing to stand up in the context of Black Lives Matter, [...] I just want to take a minute to recognise that this is also an opportunity for a great correction in sport for development.

“We’re still too white, we’re still too male, we’re still too north focused, we’re still too elite and we’re absolutely still too cisgender. I could make a long list, but I think that this is the moment for us to consider how to make some of the corrections that are in our sector absolutely vital.”

In that spirit, Women Win have created six calls to action for the sport for development sector:

1. Hold the line – focus on the most vulnerable to ensure social gains are not reversed

Sport for development has made a lot of gains in the last two decades, as have societies. We must not lose them. We must be held accountable for how we focus on the most vulnerable and their social gains.

2. Act local, feed the global

We can feed the global, but we need to turn the sport for development sector upside down by acting local. It is important to learn lessons from people working locally and ensure more resources get to them.

3. Leapfrog: Leverage technology to our advantage (and don't overlook low-tech solutions)

We must make sure technology gets to the most vulnerable. This can level the playing field. Technology can be a great enabler, but the pandemic has also taught us the importance of low-tech solutions, which shouldn't be overlooked.

4. Create new alliances and plan for multiple new realities

Governments will have to play a key role and we need to involve governments that are currently less active in sport for development. We should also strengthen our relationships with rights-based organisations.

5. Prepare for the predictable – focus on economic resilience and trauma

Children and young people will leave the pandemic with some level of trauma. We need to prepare for this, train coaches to deal with it and examine every part of our own operations and programmes.

6. Advocate, advocate, advocate for a healthy S4D ecosystem

It is important to take care of every part of the sport for development ecosystem, not just our own partners and what we have invested in. Funders should have much larger, broader approaches.

Bobenrieth ended by highlighting the Global Resilience Fund for Girls and Young Women, which Women Win have been involved in. It is a pooled fund, with lots of donors putting money in, and it has a shared governance structure with funders and recipients. She urges the sport for development sector to rethink funding models in order to redress global power imbalances and democratise.

The future of sport and development: A youth perspective



Warren Lucas
Youth leader in sport for development
South Africa

During his presentation, Warren Lucas emphasised how the changes that are occurring now, both because of the pandemic and because of the fourth industrial revolution, will influence sport and development.

“The fourth industrial revolution is about more than just technological-driven change,” he said. “It is an opportunity to help everyone, including leaders, policymakers, and people from all income groups and nations to harness converging technologies in order to create an inclusive, human-centred future.

“The real opportunity is to look beyond technology and find ways for the greatest number of people to benefit their families and communities. Even in uncertain times of turmoil, which we are currently in at the moment, we did not take a pause or stop working. We continued to serve and push forward in our mission to safeguard sport from present, emerging and future threats.”

Similarly, the pandemic creates both challenges and opportunities for the Sustainable Development Goals. Lucas outlined these in relation to two of them.

SDG 3: Good health and wellbeing

Opportunities:

- COVID-19 shows the importance of sport and physical activity in its potential to boost immunity and promote physiological development
- COVID-19 has forced sport leaders to be more vocal on how sport is important for development to maintain health and wellbeing for all
The pandemic has provided a period for the introspection, regrouping and repositioning of sport to further support communities and participants
- The pandemic provides an opportunity to use sport to address both physical and mental health, particularly as depression and anxiety are increasing



Challenges:

- Sport facilities are safe spaces – when closed in lockdown, youth without a place of refuge, essential for healing, trauma management and recovery
- Most people are unable to meet WHO guidelines on daily physical activity due to lockdowns, placing youth at increased risk of non-communicable diseases
- The social wellness aspect of sport and recreation now takes a backseat as social distancing becomes more important
- Sport may never recover in under resourced countries with institutions closing

SDG 4: Quality Education

Opportunities:

- COVID-19 has encouraged the sport and fitness fraternity to use technology to deliver sport
- We have been able to reflect on the physiological benefits of physical activity and encourage society to remain active during the lockdown
- Social connectedness during social distancing is a new normal, helping us to stay in touch and continue learning and upskilling ourselves
- Youth and adults have been required to work together. Youth expose older members of society to the benefits of technology for development, especially in sport and education



Challenges:

- Some people don't have technology or the financial means to keep up with remote education or remote sport participation
- Social and economic imbalances may increase the marginalisation of disadvantaged groups as technology becomes more important in sport
- Due to this economic imbalance, neither sport nor education can be delivered to everyone

Sport's short-term investments have long-term implications

Ben Howard

*Program Manager, Pacific Sport Partnership
sportanddev Steering Board member*



Will the sports industry continue to invest in women's sports, para sports and sport for development, or will they see these as expenses and cut their investment? That question underpinned Ben Howard's [response to the sportanddev call for articles](#). He argued that those who continue to invest will come out stronger in the long term. During the webinar, he used three examples to illustrate this:

- Women's sport: The final of the 2020 Women's T20 Cricket World Cup in Melbourne drew over 80,000 attendees, while the Women's Football World Cup has now overtaken the Men's Rugby World Cup in terms of TV audiences
- Para sport: At the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games you could buy a day pass and attend any event; 12 years later, at the London Paralympic Games, all events were sold out
- Sport for development: There has been investment in ChildFund's Pass It Back campaign in Asia for several years, and it was the main charity partner of the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan. Over 2 million British pounds were raised to support the programme

Howard also highlighted three articles from other writers in the Pacific region. First was "Rejoining sport for development and peace, sport for all and high-performance sport back together in the era of Covid-19 and the SDGs," written by Dr Lewis Keane, policy and research focal point in the Commonwealth Sport for Development and Peace Working Group.

In his article, Keane argued that rather than being rivals, sport for development, sport for all and high-performance sport should become more integrated. Howard agrees: "We need to view sport as a continuum where the different components work together rather than in competition."

Melissa Palombi, Social Responsibility Programme Manager at the Oceania Football Confederation, wrote the article "Making sport more disaster ready – How can we be more than just play?" It shows how the confederation has helped children recover from natural disasters and now pandemics in the Pacific, highlighting how sport for development programmes can be part of disaster responses.

Lastly, Ema Levarci's article, "How our COVID-19 response has shaped our sport for development future," outlines how the National Rugby League, who Levarci works for as the Fiji Manager, has embedded technology in its work. In Papua New Guinea and Fiji, staff have recorded sessions for delivery online and on TV, and they have produced social media exercise videos. Staff in Samoa ran writing and drawing competitions, showcasing their work on social media, and staff in Tonga produced rugby-league-themed health messaging videos.

As a sportanddev Steering Board member, Howard ended his presentation by acknowledging the need to upgrade the sportanddev platform so that it can better serve its users and broader sector.

"Just like Ema and her team at the National Rugby League, who successfully adapted, we have to as well. We recently put out a call for feedback on what people want to see in a future website and aim to launch in the future."

The road ahead

Imagine a future where sport for development and community sport are considered as important as elite sport. Where everyone has access to sport, regardless of age, sex, race, disability or sexual orientation. Where more women, refugees, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, young people and people from low- and middle-income countries are able to access their right to play and are better represented in management positions and on our boards.

We are not there yet, but many sportanddev writers and webinar presenters have shown they share that vision. As we move through the next stages of the pandemic, we have the chance to improve the role sport plays in serving society. Equity, access and inclusion need to be at the heart of that. We need to look at the way we manage policies and programmes and how decisions are made.

COVID-19 is deepening inequality in societies. There is a risk that inequality in sport for development deepens as well. Bigger, more well-established organisations will survive, but the future is uncertain for smaller organisations.

We need to continue to make the case for sport for development, improving the way we measure and demonstrate our impact. We need to support the most vulnerable in our communities and in our sector. But there is also cause for optimism.

One effect of lockdowns is that many people now appreciate sport and physical activity more than ever before. Sport for development organisations have supported their communities and moved project activities online and innovated widely.

The sector is unusual in its ability to bring together such a wide range of actors. And, as this report have shown, sport for development is a vibrant community that is full of ideas and innovation. These are factors we can take advantage of and must do so.

Other vulnerable groups such as refugees and people with disabilities have also been severely affected. As the United Nations Development Fund says, “While coronavirus has respected no national borders, it will continue to discriminate against the most vulnerable.”

At sportanddev, we also need to look at where we can improve. We have a

platform to bring together different actors, and we are committed to ensuring that a wider variety of voices are heard.

As this report shows, we have an international audience; however, certain regions and topics are better represented than others. We want to publish content from a broader range of organisations and people.

These include those actors in Latin America, West Africa and the

Middle East and those working on disability, indigenous sports and LGBTQ+ rights.

We are shaping our future content strategy with this goal in mind. We have plans to improve our website in order to support that, including by offering content in more languages. Knowledge sharing, discussion and partnership building are key during this time. We want to improve how we do that in collaboration with our community and partners.



Acknowledgements

We are immensely grateful to all of you who support us and take part in our work. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this report by writing articles or speaking on our webinar, and to all of you who partner with us, fund us, write for us and give us feedback throughout the year.

A special thanks to the Commonwealth for supporting this report, Marion Keim and Eli Wolff for moderating and helping to organise our webinar, and to all webinar panellists and everyone who wrote articles for this call.

Publisher: The International Platform on Sport and Development

Authors: Ben Sanders, Paul Hunt

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About sportanddev

The International Platform on Sport and Development (sportanddev) is the leading global hub for those using sport to achieve social, economic and environmental objectives. It is widely recognised as the foremost global platform to share knowledge, build good practice, facilitate coordination and foster partnerships in sport and development.

sportanddev operates an online platform (sportanddev.org), which provides the latest news, commentary articles, research, learning tools, networks and job opportunities in the sport and development field. We also work offline, supporting and coordinating projects, events, advocacy efforts and other initiatives. We offer other services, including an open-access online learning course, technical support and consultancies.

While sport is recognised as an enabler of the SDGs, sport and development actors face various challenges which are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has never been more important to demonstrate the value of sport in development, and sportanddev is well placed to coordinate efforts to tackle these global challenges. We invite you to partner with us.



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