

THEMATIC PROFILE

SPORT AND DISABILITY

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DISABILITY SPORT and ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Introduction

This section is intended to provide a summary of current thinking on the adaptation of physical activity, sport and recreation opportunities to ensure participation of individuals with disability in development contexts.

Today, the idea of people with a disability being able to participate in sport and physical activity is not so uncommon. In many countries, opportunities exist at the grassroots level through to elite competition for people with a disability to showcase their abilities in the domain of sport and physical activity. However, this is not uniform around the world and whilst there has been progressive and positive change in quality of life for people with disabilities in many developed countries, often this progress is not reflected in developing countries.

People with a disability in developing countries face major barriers that limit their access to and participation in sport and physical activity. Within a development context, these barriers impact on both the building up of activity pathways for people with disabilities in developing countries and also on the use of sport and physical activity programmes for wider development goals.

The World Health Organisation estimates that six hundred and fifty million people live with disabilities of various types, and the number is increasing due to the rise of chronic diseases, injuries, car crashes, falls, violence and other causes such as ageing. Of this total, 80% live in low-income countries; most are poor and have limited or no access to basic services, including rehabilitation facilities.

This rising incidence of disability, particularly in developing countries has the potential to place further burdens on governments and health care systems. Sport can be a low-cost and effective means to foster positive health and well-being, social inclusion and community building for people with a disability.

Further links

[Next Step Youth Have Their Say](#)

(Insight, Next Step Namibia, 2007)

This film was made by Youth Leaders from across Africa & South America taking part in the Next Step Conference, Namibia. After receiving participatory video training from Insight, Young Leaders used their skills to convey messages from the youth at the main sport for development conference. This is a collection of the films they made including powerful testaments to the benefit of sport and highlights some of the issues that people with a disability face in developing countries.

The Role of Sport and Adapted Physical Activity for People with Disabilities

Sport can play a key role in the lives and communities of people with disabilities, the same as it can for people without a disability. Sport encompasses all forms of physical activity and includes play, exercise, recreation, organised, casual or competitive sport and indigenous sport or games that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. There is a wealth of evidence to support participation in sport and physical activity for people with a disability concerning trends, barriers and benefits of participation.

Over the past three decades, research efforts have developed significantly in the area of disability sport and adapted physical activity. Numerous studies have revealed that physical activity and sport participation result in improved functional status and quality of life among people with selected disabilities.

Scientific research has been conducted across disability groups that reveal participation in sport and physical activity leads to improved levels of physical health and well-being. Sport and physical activity has also been shown to improve physical fitness and general mood in psychiatric patients with depressive and anxiety disorders. Additionally, sport and physical activity has been linked to improvements in self-confidence, social awareness and self-esteem and can contribute to empowerment of people with disabilities.

In developing countries, people with a disability often face additional barriers to participation in sport and society and these may include for example, complex issues including attitudes towards disability, traditional and religious beliefs, physical education systems, access to sporting infrastructure including services, facilities and equipment.

Integration and inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream sport has been a key focus in recent decades and has created new opportunities for participation and competition. On a larger scale, participation in disability sport also contributes to nation building and national identity and can also promote rehabilitation of people with disabilities following natural and man-made disasters.

Recommended Reading

Parnes, P. & Hashemi, G. (2007) **Sport as a means to foster inclusion, health and well-being of people with disabilities**

<http://iwg.sportanddev.org/data/htmleditor/file/Lit.%20Reviews/literature%20review%20SDP.pdf>

A comprehensive review of the current literature and evidence related to sport for people with a disability. Commissioned by the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, this document contains a summary of evidence related to disability sport and health and well-being along with an annotated bibliography.

Sherill, C. (2007) **Young People with Disability in Physical Education/Physical Activity/Sport In and Out of Schools: Technical Report for the World Health Organisation**

<http://www.icsspe.org/documente/YOUNGPEOPLE.pdf>

In 2004, the World Health Organisation (WHO) commissioned the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE) to prepare a series of technical

papers to assist in the preparation of resources for young people, in the context of World Move for Health Day. This technical paper outlines the benefits of physical education for young people.

Further links

Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly (APAQ)

<http://www.humankinetics.com/APAQ/journalAbout.cfm>

An international, multidisciplinary journal, designed to stimulate and communicate high scholarly inquiry related to physical activity for special needs populations. APAQ publishes the latest research in adapted physical activity and is an essential resource in this academic field.

Palaestra

<http://www.palaestra.com/>

A forum for sport, physical education and recreation for those with disabilities that provides readers with a combination of journal articles and reports with the latest updates on new technologies, sports and adapted activities along with current events.

Themes in Disability Sport and Development

Note: We do not claim to be exhaustive in our coverage of these themes and welcome any additional themes and other documents.

Milestones in APA and Sports for Participants with Disabilities

There is evidence of people with a disability participating in sport as early as the 18th and 19th centuries and sport activities were instrumental in the rehabilitation of people with a disability.

The earliest international competition that still exists today was the first International Silent Games held in Paris in 1924. Two men are credited with pioneering the first International Silent Games, Mr Eugene Rubens-Alcais of France and Mr Antoine Dresse of Belgium. Although the name of the games changed periodically, a world games for the deaf was held every four years since that time, except during World War II. Immediately at the end of the war, however, deaf sport quickly resumed and the first winter games took place in 1949 in Seefeld, Austria.

World War II had a significant impact on the development of disability sport and during the rehabilitation of injured war veterans, the Paralympic Games were born. In 1944, Sir Ludwig Guttmann organised a sports competition for World War II veterans with spinal cord injury in Stoke Mandeville, England. By 1948 this had quickly developed into the first Stoke Mandeville Games, which were the precursor to the Paralympic Games. In 1976, the games expanded to include other disability groups and the first Paralympic winter games were held in Sweden.

In June, 1962 Eunice Kennedy-Shriver started a summer day camp for children and adults with intellectual disabilities at her home. This rapidly developed into the first Special Olympics World Games that took place in 1968 at Soldier Field in Chicago, USA. The first winter games followed in Colorado, USA in 1977.

Since the 1970s the concept of organised multi-sport and multi-disability games became popular and a number of regional games for people with a disability also emerged. These include games such as the Parapan American Games and the Far East and South Pacific Games.

Whilst there is limited historical and statistical evidence of the participation of people with a disability in developing countries, in the three largest international competitions – Deaflympics, Paralympic Games and Special Olympics World Games, participation by developing countries has seen the greatest improvement since 1990.

Recommended Reading

Legg, D., Ernes, C. et. al (2004) **Historical Overview of the Paralympics, Special Olympics and Deaflympics**

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Historical+overview+of+the+Paralympics,+Special+Olympics,+and...-a0114366604>

This document introduces the history of the three largest sporting movements for people with a disability and outlines the key milestones that have occurred in each movement.

Definitions and Terminology

The language of disability sport differs in some parts of the world and an overview of the latest definitions and terminology is provided.

Disability

Anyone in the community may experience disability at some point in their lifetime. Disability is a normal part of the human experience, and people with disabilities are part of all sectors of the community: men, women, and children; indigenous and non-indigenous; employers and employees; students and teachers; consumers and citizens.

There are numerous definitions of disability and the debate surrounding appropriate definitions of disability have evolved over time. The World Health Organisation states that “disability (resulting from an impairment) is a restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.”

The United Nations defines persons with disabilities (PWD) as persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Statistics on disability are difficult to compare internationally and also disability statistics do not always include the same definitions, types or categories of disability. The length of time a person is deemed ‘disabled’ affects the way the statistical data is measured and interpreted.

Disability Sport

Disability sport is a term that refers to sport designed for, or specifically practiced, by people with disabilities. People with disabilities are also referred to as athletes with disabilities. Deaf sport is distinguished from other groups of people with disabilities and in some countries deaf people prefer not to label deafness as a disability. The rules of deaf sport are not altered, only instead of whistles and start guns, athletes and officials communicate through signs, flags and lights. In many developing countries deafness is still considered a disability.

Adapted Physical Activity (APA)

Adapted physical activity is the profession, the scholarly discipline or field of knowledge, and the service delivery, advocacy and empowerment systems that have been created specifically to make healthy, enjoyable physical activity accessible to all and to assure equal rights to sport instruction, coaching, medicine, recreation, competition and performance of persons with disabilities. According to the International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (IFAPA), Adapted Physical Activity (APA) means:

- A service-oriented profession
- An academic specialisation or field of study
- A cross disciplinary body of knowledge
- An emerging discipline or subdiscipline
- A philosophy or set of beliefs that guides practices
- An attitude of acceptance that predisposes behaviours
- A dynamic system of interwoven theories and practices
- A process and a product (i.e. programmes in which adaptation occurs)

- An advocacy network for disability rights to physical activity of participants with disability

Terminology

The language that is used to describe people with disabilities has an impact on impressions and attitudes. The consensus is to always refer to the person first rather than the disability. For example, 'person with cerebral palsy', 'person with downs syndrome.'

It is widely recognised that using words such as 'tragic,' 'afflicted,' 'victim' or 'confined to a wheelchair' should be avoided. Words such as 'uses a wheelchair' are widely considered more appropriate. It is important to use normal language and to recognise that some terms are more accepted than others and the language of disability can differ between countries.

Recommended reading

IPC Style Guide

http://www.paralympic.org/release/Main_Sections_Menu/IPC/Reference_Documents/IPC_Style_Guide.pdf

(International Paralympic Committee)

This is a detailed guide that lists the preferred terminology of the International Paralympic Committee. The IPC recommend that it is used in documents, correspondence and publications that relate to the Paralympic movement.

Special Olympics Language Guide

http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Press_Room/Language_Guide/default.htm

(Special Olympics International)

Language guidelines have been developed by experts for people writing or speaking about people with intellectual disabilities to ensure that all people are portrayed with individuality and dignity.

Further links

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health

<http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/site/icftemplate.cfm>

(World Health Organisation)

The official website of the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Function, Disability and Health including reference material, training tools and links to further information.

Disability and Rehabilitation

<http://www.who.int/disabilities/en/>

(World Health Organisation)

This website contains an overview of the activities of the World Health Organisation in relation to people with a disability.

Theoretical Approaches to Disability

In recent decades, there has been increased emphasis on the social model of disability rather than the medical model. The theoretical model that underpins a programme or organisation influences the way services are provided and the type of interventions that are implemented. A basic understanding of the main theories of disability can help to shed light on different approaches.

The Medical model

Two major conceptual models of disability have been proposed. The *medical model* views disability as a feature of the person, directly caused by the disease, trauma or other health condition, which requires medical care provided in the form of individual treatment by professionals. Disability, on this model, calls for medical or other treatment or intervention, to 'correct' the problem with the individual.

The Social Model

The *social model* of disability, on the other hand, sees disability as a socially-created problem and not at all an attribute of an individual. On the social model, disability demands a political response, since the problem is created by an unaccommodating physical environment brought about by attitudes and other features of the social environment.

The Biopsychosocial Model

On their own the medical and social models are partially valid but not adequate so a synthesis of both models is the most useful approach. The latest International Classification and Functioning from the World Health Organisation is based on the *biopsychosocial model* which is an integration of the medical and social models and provides a coherent view of different perspectives of health: biological, individual and social.

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health is more commonly known as the ICF and it provides a standard language and framework for the description of health and health-related states. The first version was published in 1980 and was updated in 2002. The latest version puts the notion of health and disability in a new light by acknowledging that every human being can experience a decrement in health and thereby experience some disability. This is not something that happens only to a minority of humanity.

In the ICF, the term *functioning* refers to all body functions, activities and participation, while *disability* is similarly an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. In ICF disability and functioning are viewed as outcomes of interactions between *health conditions* (diseases, disorders and injuries) and *contextual factors*. Among contextual factors are external *environmental factors* (for example, social attitudes, architectural characteristics, legal and social structures, as well as climate, terrain and so forth); and internal *personal factors*, which include gender, age, coping styles, social background, education, profession, past and current experience, overall behaviour pattern, character and other factors that influence how disability is experienced by the individual.

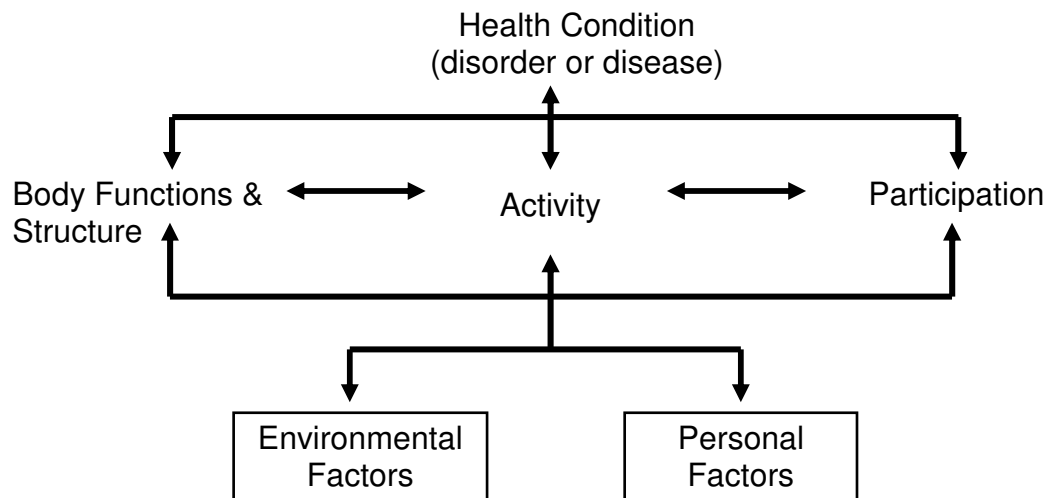


Figure: International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health

The diagram identifies three levels of human functioning classified by ICF: functioning at the level of body or body part, the whole person, and the whole person in a social context. Disability therefore involves dysfunction at one or more of these same levels; impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions.

Recommended Reading

[Towards a Common Language for Functioning, Disability and Health: ICF](#)

(World Health Organisation, 2002)

A document published by the World Health Organisation that introduces and explains the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, its purposes, history and application.

Opportunities for Participation

Since the 1970's, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of international organisations and associations serving athletes with disabilities. At the local level, in some countries there are increased opportunities for people with a disability to participate in school-based physical education, clubs and community associations and casual recreation.

In terms of competitive sport, opportunities for athletes with a disability range from sport and disability specific world championships, regional multi-sport tournaments such as the Parapan American Games, selected events for athletes with a disability in Olympic and Commonwealth Games and some athletes with a disability also compete in mainstream competitions against able-bodied athletes. There are now more than 17 international games for athletes with disabilities.

The three largest international disability sport competitions are the Special Olympics, Paralympic Games and Deaflympics. Special Olympics provide year-round training and competition opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities at all levels. The Paralympic Games provide international competition for six different disability groups including amputee, cerebral palsy, visual impairment, spinal cord injuries, intellectual disability and les autres (those that do not fit into the other groups). The Deaflympics provide competition for athletes who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Paralympic Games cater for elite athletes with physical disabilities while Special Olympics offer sporting opportunities to all persons with intellectual disabilities from elite to those with severe and profound challenges. Since 2001 athletes with an intellectual disability have been unable to participate in the Paralympic Games. This is due to the suspension of their representative body, the International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability (INAS-FID), from the International Paralympic Committee while the classification system is reviewed.

Recent research conducted in 2007 highlights the lack of participation from developing countries in international disability sport competition. In total, 23% of developing countries have not participated in either Deaflympic, Paralympic or Special Olympics World Games competition. Oceania is the region with the least participation historically, followed by Africa and Asia. Participation in winter games from developing countries is very low, whilst the participation of women in winter sport is even lower and declining with time.

At the grassroots level, programme development from key organisations, such as Handicap International, have enabled thousands of people with a disability in developing countries to become active in sport and physical activity.

Recommended Reading

Lauff, J., Kahrs, N. & Doll-Tepper, G. (2007) **Developing Country Participation in International Disability Sport Competition**

This document explores the historic participation of developing countries in the three largest international disability sport competitions, Deaflympics, Paralympic Games and Special Olympics World Games from 1991 to 2006.

Barriers to Participation

On an individual level, people with a disability may face a number of additional barriers to participation in sport compared with people without a disability. Some common barriers include:

- Lack of early experiences in sport (this varies between individuals and whether a disability is from birth or acquired later in life)
- Lack of understanding and awareness of how to include people with a disability in sport
- Limited opportunities and programmes for participation, training and competition
- Lack of accessible facilities, such as gymnasiums and other infrastructure
- Limited accessible transportation
- Limiting psychological and sociological factors including attitudes towards disability of parents, coaches, teachers and even people with disabilities themselves
- Limited access to information and resources

Regarding participation of developing countries in international sports there is a widening gap between developed and developing countries. This gap has been linked to a shortage of physical education and sport for all programmes, a lack of financing for sport, few sport facilities and limited equipment, a 'muscle drain' to developed countries, and no capacity to host major sporting events with the result that developing countries have fewer world-level sport performances than developed countries.

Limited access to sport services, sports information and the issue of doping are becoming increasingly problematic. Developing countries also face a range of social and cultural barriers that impact on sport participation including: religion, culture, language, and the lingering influence of colonialism in many parts of the world.

Listed together these barriers may appear insurmountable but it is important to recognise that not every person will experience all of these barriers. In the interest of facilitating active participation from people with a disability in developing countries, the potential impact of these barriers should be taken into consideration.

There is limited research that explores the specific barriers to participation in sport for people with a disability in developing countries. Much more evidence is needed along with financial support to ensure that people with a disability have both the opportunity and the choice to participate in sport regardless of which country they live in.

Recommended Reading

Andreff, W. (2001) **The Correlation between Economic Underdevelopment and Sport**

See

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a777437342~db=all~order=page>

for an abstract

This article outlines some of the key barriers that developing countries face in relation to participation in sport and the relationships between economic development and sports

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performance in international competition. Whilst not specifically focused on disability sport, it provides a good overview of the barriers that people in developing countries face in relation to sport participation.

Eligibility and Classification

At the grassroots level, people with a disability can participate together with limited emphasis on rules and regulations. As elements of competition are introduced, it becomes more important to group people together according to their abilities in order to ensure fair competition.

Eligibility

For an athlete with a disability to participate in international disability sport competitions such as the Paralympic Games, Deaflympics and Special Olympics World Games, they must first meet minimum eligibility criteria and be a member of an affiliated national association.

In the Paralympic Games, the eligibility criteria differ across sports and disability groups. The Paralympic Games also have qualification criteria that athletes need to meet in order to compete at a Paralympic Games.

To be eligible to compete in the Deaflympics, athletes must have a hearing loss of at least 55 decibels in the better ear. Athletes are forbidden to use any kind of hearing amplifications during competition to avoid taking an unfair advantage over those not using these devices.

In Special Olympics, an athlete must be at least eight years of age and be identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability to be eligible to participate. A unique system of 'divisioning' groups athletes together for competition based on age, gender and ability.

Classification

Once eligible for a sport or event, an athlete is then classified according to their level of functional ability. The concept of classification is similar to the way athletes compete in different weight categories in wrestling, boxing and weightlifting. The classification system varies for each sport but is simply a system of grouping athletes of similar abilities for sport competition.

For more detailed information regarding athlete classification in the Paralympic Games, see the website of the International Paralympic Committee www.paralympic.org

Further links

Further information on eligibility and classification can be found at the following web-links:

Special Olympics Divisioning

<http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Compete/Divisioning/default.htm>

Paralympic Games Classification

http://www.paralympic.org/release/Main_Sections_Menu/Classification

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Eligibility at the Deaflympics
<http://www.deaflympics.com/athletes/?ID=239>

Disability and Gender

In all areas of disability, women have a right to participation and this includes as athletes, coached, officials, managers, sport scientists, administrators and leaders. More than two-thirds of the world's women live in developing countries, but the overall participation rates for sport are minimal.

Women in developing countries experience additional barriers to sport participation and these have been linked to issues such as the male dominated world of sport, class, culture, body image and dress in addition to religious, traditional and cultural beliefs regarding the role of women.

Women with disabilities face 'double discrimination' in disability sport – being disabled and being a woman. There are statistically less women with disabilities across the spectrum than men and women are less prone to taking up sport. In 2005, it was estimated that women make up only about one-third of athletes with disabilities in international competitions.

Further research is required in specific countries and regions to identify the issues and obstacles that women are facing.

Recommended Reading

Olenik, L. Matthews, J & Steadward, R. (1995) **Women, Disability and Sport: Unheard Voices**

<https://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/cws/article/viewFile/9364/8481>

This article focuses on the experience of women in the Paralympic movement. Five female winter Paralympians were interviewed and the analysis of their responses highlights some of the barriers women in the Paralympic Games experience.

Equipment and Technology

Sports equipment and technology is an issue for developing countries and will continue to restrict participation and performance in sport.

Equipment

Some adaptive equipment is required for some athletes to participate in sport and include things like throwing frames for athletes, crutches, sport-specific wheelchairs (such as those used in basketball, tennis and rugby)

In developing countries, often lack access to things such as crutches, everyday wheelchairs in addition to limited basic sporting equipment. A lack of facilities or limited access to existing facilities is often problematic in developing countries and with limited means to host large sporting events, the onus is on local and national governments to maintain and develop sporting facilities.

Some organisations focus on providing much needed equipment to people with disabilities in developing countries and prosthetic limbs, wheelchairs and crutches are sometimes the focus of equipment donations.

Technology

The introduction of new materials for prosthetic devices such as carbon flex-fibre, along with new developments in wheelchair technology is impacting on the performance of many sports.

A recent example is the case of South African Paralympic sprinter Oscar Pistorius who had ambitions to compete in the Olympic Games. In January 2008, research conducted by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) ruled that his 'cheetah' blades gave him mechanical advantage and led to controversy on his eligibility to participate in the Beijing Olympic Games.

As technology and assistive devices continue to advance, the gap between participation and performance of developed and developing countries is likely to continue. One innovative project is underway to provide a low-cost universal sports wheelchair for developing countries. The Motivation Trust in the United Kingdom is pioneering and testing a new design that is hoped to fill a much needed gap in the provision of affordable sports wheelchairs in developing countries.

At the grassroots level, expensive equipment and technology is not required in order for people with a disability to participate and through inclusive coaching everyone can be encouraged to actively participate in sport. Many games and activities can be designed or adapted to require minimal or no equipment. If individuals require assistive devices (prosthetics, orthotics, wheelchairs), the ideal situation is to have these items made and maintained locally. There have been many innovative solutions, such as crutches made from bamboo in remote village communities.

Recommended Reading

IPC's Position Statement on Oscar Pistorius

http://www.paralympic.org/release/Main_Sections_Menu/News/Press_Releases/2008_01_14_a.html

The IPC released a statement on 14 January 2008 on the results of the research commissioned by the IAAF in relation to Oscar Pistorius' 'Cheetah' prostheses.

Motivation Trust

http://www.motivation.org.uk/our_work/services.html

Motivation Trust works to empower people with mobility disabilities by providing low-cost, specially-designed wheelchairs for people with disabilities in low-income countries.

Policy Development

A number of international charters and policies have had an impact on the area of disability sport and development.

International Charters and Policies

Early international policies related to sport and development began with the Council of Europe formulating a policy on Sport For All which was passed in 1966 declaring that *every individual shall have the right to participate in sport.*

In 1978, the United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organisation adopted an International Charter of Physical Education and Sport which stated that *every person is entitled to participate in sport, including specifically women, young people, the elderly and those with a disability.* The United Nations declared 1981 the International Year of Disabled People and although there was much debate over the term 'disabled people' this was the first step in raising global awareness about people with disabilities and some of the issues they were facing.

In 1987, the Council of Europe extended their recognition of the right to participate in sport by creating the Sport for All: Disabled People charter:

What matters most for the Council of Europe, as reflected in the words of Sir Ludwig Guttmann, is that 'sport should become a driving force for the disabled to seek or restore his contact with the world around him and thus his recognition as an equal and respected citizen.

The United Nations declared 1981 to 1991 the International Decade of People with a Disability and following this decade developed the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Persons with Disabilities. Another important outcome of these developments was the introduction of an International Day for Disabled People.

Some of these early international instruments related to sport have enabled participation in sport to grow around the world and also stimulated policy development in regions of the world. In Europe, 2003 was declared the European Year of Persons with Disabilities at the end of which a Decalogue of Adapted Sport was proposed. This was followed by a European Year of Education through Sport in 2004. Similar examples of regional policy development are evidenced by the African Decade of Disabled Persons (2000 – 2009).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

In December 2006, the United Nations enacted a comprehensive legislation called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The purpose of the convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities. Importantly, the convention also includes in Article 30.5, specific legislation on the rights of people with a disability to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities.

This convention is a major step toward changing the perception of disability and ensures that societies recognise that all people must be provided with the opportunities to live life to their fullest potential, whatever that may be. Other human rights treaties, such as the conventions on the rights of children and women have had a major effect in addressing rights violations and this new convention is a major milestone in the human rights protection of people with a disability around the world.

Recommended Reading

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/convtexte.htm>

The full text of the convention is available from the United Nations. There are also links to frequently asked questions that provide a summary of the convention and its relevance in relation to human rights legislation.

Sport in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

<http://www.sportanddev.org/data/document/document/336.pdf>

(International Disability in Sport Working Group, 2007)

This document includes statements from various organisations involved in sport and development. It outlines the impact of the convention and the opportunities for targeted promotion and lobbying across the world.

Tools and Practice

More and more coaching resources and materials are emerging that focus on including people with a disability in sport.

The principles of adapting and modifying activities for inclusion by people with a disability are constantly developing as research and programme development continues.

Key Tips for Including People with a Disability in Sport

- Treat people with disabilities who participate in sport as athletes
- Focus on what the athlete can do and has the potential to do. A lack of skill does not necessarily indicate the lack of potential ability
- Teaching or coaching style, rules, equipment and the environment can all be adapted and modified to promote active participation from every person
- Use the athlete as a resource of information on themselves, and ask them what they can do and how specific tasks may be modified to suit their skill level
- Whether a disability is acquired from birth or later in life may have an impact on a person's basic skill level.
- Including people with a disability is simply good coaching

Recommended Reading

Fun Inclusive

http://www.handicap-international.org.uk/pdfs/Fun_Inclusive_Sport_and_Disability.pdf

(Handicap International, 2007)

This handbook provides basic guidelines for the implementation of sports and games as means of rehabilitation and integration for children and young people with disabilities. The handbook intends to inspire and motivate institutions, organisations, trainers, physiotherapists, teachers and especially young people and children to come together and practice sport. It builds on the experiences from workshops in Angola and Cambodia, which tested the selected games and activities within the handbook.

ADAPT CD-ROM

<http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/thenapa/adapt.htm>

(Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2005)

This is a valuable resource for on campus and distance learning intended for students, professionals and community members. It provides basic information in ten sections that focus on the planning and implementation of adapted physical activity at all levels and areas including rehabilitation, education, recreation and elite sports. This CD-ROM is available in 14 languages.

Werner, D. (1999) **Disabled Village Children: A guide for community health workers, rehabilitation workers, and families**

<http://www.dinf.ne.jp/doc/english/global/david/dwe002/dwe00201.htm>

This book offers a very comprehensive and well-illustrated guide to rehabilitation, developed by a group of village health and rehabilitation workers in Mexico. The chapter

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on Range-of-motion and other exercise includes step-by-step instructions for stretching, exercises and games for people with various disabilities.

International Organisations

An overview of key organisations that are involved in disability sport and development is provided. Further information can be obtained from the websites of each organisation.

Handicap International

Overview

Handicap International is an international organisation specialised in the field of disability. Non-governmental, non-religious, non-political and non-profit making, it works alongside people with disabilities, whatever the context, offering them assistance and supporting them in their efforts to become self-reliant.

Since its creation, the organisation has set up programmes in approximately 60 countries and intervened in many emergency situations. It has a network of either national associations (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, United Kingdom and USA) which provide human and financial resources, manage projects and raise awareness of Handicap International's actions and campaigns.

Handicap International's sports and leisure projects aim to strengthen people with both physical and intellectual disabilities. Sports and leisure projects focus on support to local Disabled People Organisations, training of professionals, supporting clubs and associations, improving material conditions and accessibility.

Website: www.handicap-international.org

International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity

Overview

The International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (IFAPA) is a cross-disciplinary professional organisation of individuals, institutions, and agencies supporting and promoting adapted physical activity, disability sport, and all aspects of sport, movement, and exercise science for individuals with disabilities.

IFAPA coordinates national, regional, and international functions that pertain to sport, dance, aquatics, exercise, fitness, and wellness for individuals of all ages with disabilities or special needs. Since 1978, IFAPA has conducted an International Symposium on Adapted Physical Activity (ISAPA) which is held every two years. IFAPA has seven regions including Africa, Asia, North America, South America, Europe, Middle East and Oceania.

Website: www.ifapa.biz

International Paralympic Committee

Overview

Situated in Bonn, Germany, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is the international governing body of the Paralympic Movement. The IPC supervises and coordinates the Paralympic Summer and Winter Games, as well as World Championships and other competitions.

Through its member organisations the IPC coordinates initiatives related to sport and development, and in particular is committed to sustainable development and promoting the rights of people with a disability globally. The IPC also supports the recruitment and development of athletes at the local, national and international level across all performance levels.

Founded on 22 September 1989, the IPC is an international non-profit organisation formed and run by 162 National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) from five regions and four disability specific international sports federations (IOSDs). The four IOSDs are:

CPIRSA: Cerebral Palsy International Sport and Recreation Association
IBSA: International Blind Sports Federation
INAS-FID: International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability
IWAS: International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation

Website: www.paralympic.org

Special Olympics

Overview

Special Olympics is an international nonprofit organisation dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition.

Special Olympics offer children and adults with intellectual disabilities year-round training and competition in 30 Olympic-type summer and winter sports. Special Olympics currently serve 2.5 million people with intellectual disabilities in more than 200 programmes in over 180 countries.

Special Olympics sharpened the focus on its mission as not just “nice”, but critical, not just a sports organisation for people with intellectual disabilities, but also an effective catalyst for social change.

Website: www.specialolympics.org

International Committee of Sports for the Deaf

Overview

The International Committee of Sports for the Deaf is the governing body for the summer and winter Deaflympics. The headquarters are located in Frederick, Maryland USA and for that reason the English name is used in place of the French name, Comité International des Sports des Sourds (CISS).

The Deaflympics are organised and run exclusively by members of the community they serve. Only deaf people are eligible to serve on the board and executive bodies. The International Committee of Sports for the Deaf has 96 member countries organised in four regional confederations, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Pan-America and Africa.

Website: www.deaflympics.com

Other Organisations

There are a number of other organisations that are currently active in promoting opportunities for people with a disability in developing countries to participate in sport and some of these include:

DCDD

The Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development (DCDD) brings together individuals and organisations in the areas of disability, development cooperation and service-provision.

Survivor Corps (previously named Landmine Survivors Network)

The Landmine Survivors Network was initiated in 1997 by two landmine survivors and focuses specifically on the contribution of conflict survivors in advocating for the rights of conflict survivors and in addressing conflict.

NebasNsg

This organization in the Netherlands is involved in Dutch disability sport across both intellectual and physical disability.

RESPO International

Now named Response International, this UK registered charity assists victims of violent conflict with a range of activities including 'landmine clearance and landmine awareness, victim rehabilitation, trauma surgery, assisting the return and re-integration of war refugees, health care in emergencies, and psychological/social support as part of torture rehabilitation and community based healthcare'.

Right to Play

Right to Play is one of the largest Sport & Development NGOs conducting programmes internationally and focusing a number of topics, including disability.

SCORE

SCORE has been running Sport & Development programmes since the 1990s. The organisation runs programmes for children and adults with intellectual or physical disabilities.

Terre des Hommes

The Terre des Hommes Foundation has conducted a number of Sport & Development programmes with a specific focus on children and children's rights.

Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation

The VVA has run sports projects for those with physical disabilities.

Additionally, international sporting organisations (ISOs) and international sports organisations for the disabled (ISODs) also develop specific initiatives that target people with a disability at various levels of sport and include developing countries.

Current Initiatives

The following initiatives highlight the focus of research and development in disability sport and adapted physical activity.

Awareness and Education Campaigns

Promoting and raising awareness of disability sport is a crucial step in changing attitudes and building community support. Many local projects include an element of community education and this is also important at the international level. Disability sport has become well-known in many parts of the world and this is partly due to the media exposure of high-profile events such as the Paralympic and Special Olympics World Games.

There are some very good resource materials that can be utilised to educate communities and raise awareness of the benefits of sport for people with a disability. The International Paralympic Committee has developed a Paralympic School Day educational programme which is a set of activities that educate youth about Paralympic sport, individual differences and disability issues. The Special Olympics have developed a University Curriculum which is a comprehensive package that covers on all aspects of Special Olympics programmes and opportunities.

Participation Opportunities & Talent Identification

There are many young people in developing countries that may have what it takes to be an elite athlete with a disability. Opportunities for participation at all levels are important for sport development.

A new initiative of the Special Olympics uses the global reach of football to generate greater public awareness, acceptance and respect for people with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Global Football (SOGF) is aiming to raise the necessary funds to significantly expand Special Olympics football participation on every continent providing new opportunities for participation.

Creating pathways for people with a disability to progress in sport is an important area of development. Not only do people need introductory experiences to sport but opportunities for training and competition can also provide avenues for further skill development. Some interesting examples of talent identification and recruitment programmes are being established such as the Australian Paralympic Committee's Talent Identification project and Canada's Long-Term Athlete Development model.

Emergency Relief, Disasters and Disability

Following a natural or man-made disaster, people with a disability are one of the most vulnerable groups in a community. Sport with a focus on cooperative, team-building activities can promote psychosocial rehabilitation in people affected by disaster.

Organisations such as Handicap International and the Landmine Survivors Network have used sport and play programmes for many years in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of individuals and communities all over the world. More recently, Special Olympics and the member nations of the International Paralympic Committee have become more involved in using sport to help people with a disability following a disaster.

Sport and Disability thematic profile (print version)
International Platform on Sport & Development www.sportanddev.org

Further links

Further information on some of these current initiatives can be found on the following web-links:

Paralympic School Day

http://www.paralympic.org/release/Main_Sections_Menu/Education/PSD.html
(International Paralympic Committee)

Special Olympics Global Football

http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Press_Room/Global_news/Global+Football+Initiative.htm
(Special Olympics)

Toyota Paralympic Talent Search Programme

<http://www.paralympic.com.au/Sport/TalentSearch/tabid/296/Default.aspx>
(Australian Paralympic Committee)

Long-Term Athlete Development

<http://www.ltad.ca/Content/Athletes%20with%20a%20aDisability/Introduction%20to%20LTAD.asp>
(Canadian Sport Centres)

Sport in Post-Disaster Intervention

<http://www.icsspe.org/index.php?m=16&n=32&o=89>
(International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education)

Future Priorities

Discourse in Sport & Disability has advanced significantly compared to other areas in Sport & Development. Many experts in the area of sport and disability have developed a consensus on the future priorities for research, policy development and advocacy in this area:

- Increase support and funding to conduct empirical studies on topics of disability sport and adapted physical activity in developing countries including, participation levels, attitudes, legislation, barriers and benefits of sport and physical activity.
- Develop further studies of mental health and psychological well-being as an outcome of sport participation for people with a disability.
- Create affordable technologies, and increasing accessibility and universal designs in both the environment and the structures/rules of sports.
- Produce inclusive coaching manuals and educational material in multiple languages and formats to make it accessible to developing countries
- Research and develop monitoring and evaluation tools to ensure quality sport programmes are being implemented effectively and meeting target outcomes.
- Explore qualitative research into disability sport participation in developing countries such as case studies in specific countries and regions, necessary in order to direct and consolidate development efforts.
- Create opportunities to share knowledge, experiences and best practice.
- Utilise new technologies and online communication to enhance collaboration between development organisations, researchers and programme staff.
- Widely promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to policy-makers in developing countries and lobby for national policy developments to improve access to sporting opportunities for people with a disability.

Project Case Study

Title

Women in Paralympic Sport Leadership Initiative

Target group

Women and men with and without a disability involved or interested in gender equity in Paralympic Sport

Location

Global

Organisations involved

Lead organisation: International Paralympic Committee

Partner organisation(s): Regional Paralympic Committees (e.g. Asian Paralympic Committee), National Paralympic Committees (over 50 NPCs)

About this Project

The Women in Paralympic Sport Leadership initiative was started in response to the need for female leadership in the Paralympic Movement. Read more here about how the Initiative addressed this issue.

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) identified the need for female leadership in key decision-making structures within the Paralympic Movement and concluded that a major factor was a lack of training opportunities for women. The IPC made a strategic decision in 2004 to establish the Women in Paralympic Sport Leadership Initiative. The primary focus of the Initiative is to provide regional and national leadership trainings (2-3 day Summits) for women to increase leadership capacity, create opportunities for mentorship, and establish networks (national, regional, international) on gender equity and Paralympic Sport. The concept of these highly interactive workshops is to promote and build skills while encouraging the exchange of knowledge among participants in order to build the Paralympic Movement in one region or nation and beyond. Specialised training modules were developed and delivered by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport.

Impact

Convincing governments, donors and members within the Paralympic Movement that female leadership was crucial took time. But the IPC organised a number of high-level events to encourage female leadership. Read more about what the Initiative helped to achieve.

Facts and Figures

Since 2004, the IPC organised eight Summits, 5 regional and 3 national in four regions, and more than 200 individuals directly benefited. Participants identified by National Paralympic Committees ranged in age and experience, but all were viewed as current or potential leaders within the Paralympic Movement in their country. Regional Paralympic Committees and National Paralympic Committees organised the Summits with contributions from Government Ministries and external organisations such as UK Sport and UNICEF in select regions and countries.

The primary outputs of the Summits were a transfer of leadership skills, an increase in the understanding and awareness of the key role women can play in leadership within the Paralympic Movement, individual and regional action plans, and the creation of new Women in Paralympic Sport Committees at the national level.

Lessons Learned

Major challenges included securing funding, convincing governments, donors and even members within the Paralympic Movement that this issue is of utmost importance and for the participants to get support back home to implement their action plans towards positive change.

The IPC has learned that women have strong voices and a great deal of experience to share. What they need are opportunities to share this knowledge and to receive training. Participants realised on their own that they have what it takes to become leaders if they put time into life-long learning. This empowerment was crucial to developing realistic action plans.

The formation of Women in Sport Committees was positive because it brings strength, purpose and peer-to-peer support to a group of individuals who have common goals and objectives.

The IPC recognises that the implementation of local activities is dependent on the skills of those trained. It is also important to have policies in this area to lead to sustainable and gradual leadership development over time.

Unfortunately, the Initiative has received only limited visibility in the mass media. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness about the issues women face in sport and more specifically for females with a disability.

Recommendations

The Initiative has produced a number of recommendations for those wishing to plan similar activities or initiate programmes with the same objectives. Read more here on the points to consider, drawn from the IPC Initiative experience.

The IPC recommends for other organisations tackling similar issues and planning similar activities to take the following into consideration:

- Individual action plans proved to be effective;
- Use the same facilitator for many Summits – gives overall understanding of evaluation;
- There should be a yearly follow-up Summit;
- Each country should have Summits in their country following the regional event (i.e. National Summits) which are part of the multiplier effect;
- Crucial to have NPCs as partners and an international body such as the IPC Women in Sport Committee to motivate globally;
- It is also important to have partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental community-based groups to ensure visibility and sustainability of change from the grassroots to the policy level.

Voices from the field

Participant from Regional Summit in Tanzania:

'Disability is not inability. Everyone can perform. We need to strive to achieve.'

Nora Sheffe, Summit Facilitator, CAAWS:

"The Regional Summits provide an opportunity for leaders to come together and discuss the strategies that are working in their communities and in their countries. These success stories form the foundation for the group to discuss how we can expand on these principles and projects to create similar successes in other communities both nationally and internationally."

Tine Teilmann, IPC Women in Sport Committee Chairperson:

"It is a wonderful opportunity for women and men in Paralympic sport to build a strong network, share best practices and learn leadership skills that they need to influence change in their home organisation."

Participant from National Summit in Kenya:

"The Summit was perfect; we need more of this kind. With my new knowledge in leadership and rights, I will be more active in encouraging people with disabilities to participate in all levels of sport."

Nora Sheffe, Summit Facilitator, CAAWS:

"There is nothing more rewarding for a facilitator than working with a group and seeing them move from better understanding of an issue to then take ownership of that issue and make plans for sustainable change. At the African summit, we had 45 delegates, both male and female, who had little exposure to the unique barriers faced by women in the Paralympic Movement. By sharing their stories, the group identified that the current programmes have some inherent systemic barriers that significantly reduce the number of women involved. Together, the group discussed a number of tangible strategies to provide more inclusive programmes, specifically targeting girls and women and they formed a women in sport committee to oversee the progress."