

Sports and trauma recovery

*A study on evidence-based practice of the use of sports and games
with trauma recovery in development aid*

Els van Dijkhuizen

Utrecht University
Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences
Master Maatschappelijke Opvoedingsvraagstukken
Student number 0255599

Supervisor: Drs. P.L.M. Baar
Second supervisor: Dr. W.M. van Londen- Barentsen

Initiative of the NKS (Dutch Catholic Sports Federation)

Supervisor: Mrs. L. Hallers

November 2006

Introduction

An increased striving for quality improvement of methodology and content of projects is a characteristic for the last years of development aid. Roche (2005) mentions in his book about the evaluation of development aid organizations some strongly interrelated problems Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) face (figure 1).

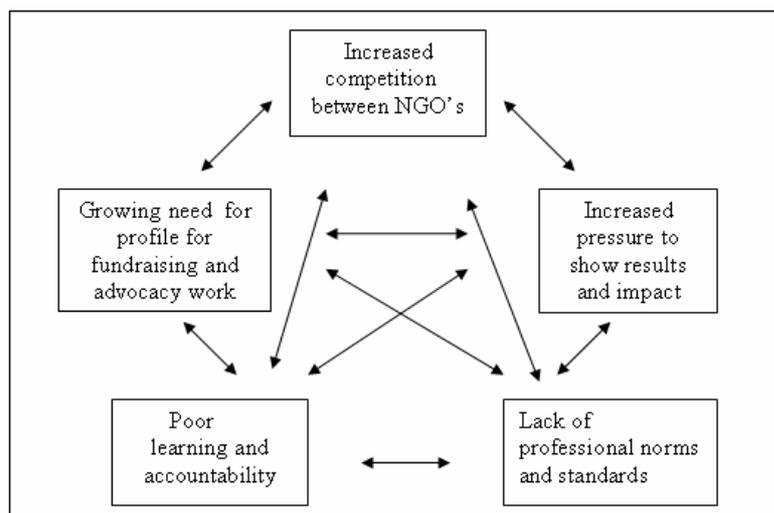


Figure 1. Vicious circle (Roche, 2005)

There is an increasing pressure on NGO's to show results and the impact of their work. One can think about the government and other donors, who give out funds more and more selectively. Next to this, and because of this, there is increased competition between NGO's and a growing need for profile for fundraising and advocacy work. Poor learning and accountability cause and at the same time are the result of a lack of professional norms and standards. The NKS (Dutch Catholic Sport Federation) is an organization that uses sport within development aid projects. The desire to use sports not only as a goal but as a means to promote a healthy lifestyle, gender equality & empowerment and peace & trauma recovery is an example of a recent trend of sport organisations in this field. The same problems mentioned in figure 1 have to be faced by these organisations though. The need for more information about the methodology of development aid projects and trauma recovery is the reason for the present study. This study to the practice-based evidence and evidence-based practice in projects using sports as an instrument for trauma recovery in development aid aims to increase insight in the effectivity and impact of sport development aid projects. This insight can improve the accountability and profilation as an organisation. This article is a summary of the research article originally written in Dutch.

Project description and evidence-based practice

Interviews with experts¹ support the fact that the idea that, to act without thorough research on the methodology and objectives of a project is unethical, is becoming more and more logical (Van Dijkhuizen, 2006). Models are

ⁱ Among others this was mentioned by drs. A. de Jager (War Child), prof. dr. M. de Winter (Utrecht University and Unicef) en mr. W. Vriend (Sondela).

valuable instruments to describe a project. The *Intervention Mapping-protocol* (Bartholomew, Parcel, Kok & Gottlieb, 2001) can be used to describe the content of the project plan. In their model for planned health promotion, Green and Kreuter (1991) identify the phases that can be placed around this project plan. A summary of these two models is included in figure 2. These models are chosen because they're based on general accepted methodological principles founded on a theoretically robust basis, proven to be effective in several studies (Green & Kreuter, 1991). They form good tools for a structured project description.

Needs assessment: 1 Epidemiology 2 Behavioral and environmental factors 3 Analyses of determinants 4 Design: A Goals B Objectives C Content, structure and procedure D Plan of implementation E Plan of evaluation 5 Implementation 6 Evaluation
Step 1 to 6 are based on the model for planned health promotion Green and Kreuter (1991).
The levels of design are based on the <i>Intervention Mapping-protocol</i> (Bartholomew, Parcel, Kok & Gottlieb, 2001)

Figure 2. Overview summary models Green & Kreuter (1991) and Bartholomew, Parcel, Kok & Gottlieb (2001)

The first phase, the *needs assessment*, is a diagnostic phase in which the intervention focuses on the wishes and needs of the target group. This *needs assessment* precedes the actual project description and can be split in the description of epidemiology, analysis of behavioral and environmental factors and analyses of determinants. In the second phase the project design is described by focusing on the five parts of the *Intervention Mapping-protocol* van Bartholomew et al. (2001) (goals, objectives, procedure, implementation plan and evaluation plan of the project). The last two steps are implementation and evaluation.

Many (sport) development projects are based on practice-based evidence, and not on evidence-based practice. A growing emphasis on the necessity of evidence-based practice and the development of evidence-based interventions appeared the last years. *Evidence-based practice* is described by Hausman (2002) as 'basing ones actions on proven causal links between interventions and result, and on a continuous monitoring of prestations'. By collecting and analysing practice-based insights, this article aims to add to the level of *evidence-based practice* in development projects using sports and games with trauma recovery as a goal.

Present study

The general question of the present study is: "*In which way does trauma recovery play a role in development aid projects that use sport and games as a means, and how can the sport and games in these projects be implemented in a more evidence-based way?*" Depth interviews would have been the best means of answering

the questions that focus on views and insights, but because of time limits and geographical distance, questionnaires are chosen, with open questions so qualitative analysis was possible. Based on internet research and inquiry at related organisations, an overview is made of organisations that work in this field. The international sport development website is used to select projects with trauma recovery as a goal (figure 3). From the 66 project developers, leaders and executors of projects that use sports and games as a means for trauma recovery in development aid that received an information letter and the questionnaire, 15 respondents replied. An overview of the organisations, projects, respondents and countries is given in figure 3.

	Organisation	Written	Response	Project countries
Dutch organisations				
Financially supporting organisations	ICCO Hivos Cordaid Plan Nederland	-	-	-
Autonomic supporting organisations	Terre des Hommes			
Organisations supporting executing organisation abroad, sport-plus	Sondela NCDO	1 -	1 -	~ Uganda
Organisation supporting executing organisation abroad- with finances and (if necessary) with trainers, sport-plus	Right to Play FASD	2 1	1 1	~ Ruanda ~ Kenya (project NOC*NSF)
Organisation executing sport-plus projects	-	-	-	
Organisation supporting executing organisation abroad, plus-sport	-	-	-	
Organisation supporting executing organisation abroad- with finances and (if necessary) with trainers, plus-sport	-	-	-	
Organisation executing sport-plus projects	War Child Unicef HealthNet/TPO	2 37 1	2 0 1	~ Uganda, Afghanistan ~ Sri Lanka, Sudan, Indonesië, Burundi
Projects from www.sportanddev.org				
Bakuriani Peace Camp	United Nations Volunteers	1	0	
ATHENS 2004 Paralympic Games Dutch Special Initiative	International Paralympic Committee	1	1	~ Angola
Bosnia-Herzegovina Sitting Volleyball Programme and Annual Princess Diana Sitting Volleyball Tournament	Landmine Survivors Network	1	1	
Projet Sport et femmes	Sport Sans Frontieres	1	0	
Sport and Play for Traumatized Children and Youth in Bam	Swiss Academy for Development SAD	1	1	~ Iran
Community Based Educational Rehabilitation Project Liberia	ZOA Refugee Care Netherlands	1	1	~ The Netherlands
National Volleyball League	Cambodian National Volleyball League	1	1	~ Cambodia
Twinned Peace Soccer Program	Peres Centre for	1	1	~ Israel

Soccer schools for Peace	Peace Coldeportes Caldas	2	1	~ Colombia
'Snow ball method'	Ministerie v.an Buitenlandse zaken		1	~ Ruanda
	British Council		1	~ Colombia

Figure 3. Overview organizations, projects, respondents

The focus of this study was on the assessment of the project by the respondents involved by these projects. The general question is split into three research questions.

The first one questions what is known from literature about the link between trauma recovery and sports, and how project developers or people in charge of the implementation of the project see this link. This was examined by two items in the questionnaire: in the first question respondents were asked about their vision concerning the place of sport as an instrument for trauma recovery. In the second question, a few contributions of sport were listed from the literature, and respondents were asked to make a priority list out of those contributions. This gave information about the link between *practice-based* insights and scientific literature. Van Montfort and Steenbergen (2002) mentioned in their Quicksan on trauma recovery, that in former war zones, sport can contribute to the first and last phase of trauma recovery; which are of increasing of the feeling of freedom and the feeling of being in control over one's own life respectively. From their own experience, the respondents gave over fifty contributions of sports, from which six ('better able to cope with life', and 'step out of isolation' amongst others) could be put among the given phases mentioned by Van Montfort and Steenbergen (2002). The largest part of the remaining contributions mentioned fit into the categories of trauma recovery by Lösel and Bliesener (1990) (*self esteem, social support outside the family, coping with stress and reconciliation*). Finally, a small amount of the given contributions concerned the natural value of sport ('everybody is welcome', 'good use of time') and especially focused on the feeling of acceptance and satisfaction by physical effort. The similarities between practice-based knowledge and literature are significant. For both parties it would be good if this practice-based knowledge would be structured and reported, giving project developers and executers the possibility of making founded choices for future projects (Hausman, 2002).

The second research question considers what the general accepted methodological insights for the effective implementation of a project are, and in which way these insights are used in (sports) development projects with trauma recovery as a general aim. Since evaluation was not the aim of the present study, the instruments and methods underlying the projects have not been examined. From the present data, conclusions can only be made about the reported effectiveness of the project and the different steps of the models of Green en Kreuter (1991) and Bartholomew et al. (2001) (see figure 1) as reported by the respondents. As expected, the projects are mostly based on practice-based knowledge, with little attention to scientific literature and theories as bases of the projects. This remains the weak spot in the vicious circle of Roche (2002) (figure 1). However, the results are positive concerning the other steps of the model for intervention mapping of Green en Kreuter (1991) and Bartholomew et al. (2001), which are mostly well reported. Most projects did a *needs assessment* before the project started. This is also true for the steps of the *Intervention Mapping-protocol* (Bartholomew et al., 2001) and the evaluation to the criteria of Green en Kreuter (1991).

The third research question is about the effectiveness of the project according to project developers or people in charge of the implementation of the project. Apart from the three respondents that did not fill in the question on the effectiveness of the project, all respondents reported some improvement from the project. Trauma recovery, if it was either a direct or an indirect goal of the program, had an influence on the reports on goals, objectives and evaluation of the projects. When sport was a direct goal of the project, these parts of the model were more concretely specified in the questionnaire. This can encourage (sport) development organizations that want to start a project in a former war zone to think seriously about sports and trauma recovery before any project activity starts. Is sport the 'miracle instrument' for trauma recovery? One respondent mentioned: "*Sport may never be the only instrument for trauma recovery.*" This is an important idea. However, evidence from the literature and reported improvements from the projects involved in this research, suggests sport does appear to be a very powerful instrument.

From the literature, little is known about the place of sports and games in these projects, and even less about the way these insights are integrated into practice. By focusing on this subject, the present study contributes greatly to the current evidence. In this study, fifteen projects are analyzed and interpreted from scientific literature and a theoretical framework has been developed for sports and games as an instrument for trauma recovery as well. This framework contained a model that is theoretically well founded and appears to be valuable in describing and analyzing (sport) development projects. With this model as a basis, a reliable research instrument has been developed for projects using sports and games as an instrument for trauma recovery in development aid. This makes this study unique. The aim of the present study is to provide a higher level of evidence-based practice and that way a higher level of effectiveness of (sport) development projects with trauma recovery as a goal.

Generalizability of this study is limited because of few respondents, possible influences of culture and language barriers, the responsibilities of the respondents in the projects (mostly project leaders or developers of the projects replied) and the indirect place trauma recovery apparently had in some projects. Future studies may incorporate the results of this preliminary exploratory study when making research plans. The expansion from only trauma recovery to the broader realm of peace building is recommended in designing future studies..

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