Lessons from practice: SCORE

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SCORE was established in South Africa in 1991 and became active in Namibia in 2000, in Zambia in 2002 and in the Netherlands as well (officially) in 2003. In the Netherlands SCORE NL supports the SCORE organisations in southern Africa by recruiting and training volunteers and by contributing manpower and funding. Over the years SCORE has learned that investing in sports is necessary to operationalise sports effectively for development purposes. SCORE’s mission is therefore to use sports to help young people acquire valuable skills, seize opportunities to succeed and contribute to their community.

Four stages in capacity-building

SCORE works with volunteers and assigns them based on their expertise to promote their home community build capacity. The volunteers work alongside paid staff members responsible for long-term ties with the community. The success, scope and sustainability of such capacity depends on the community itself and on the athletes involved. SCORE aims to facilitate the process.

SCORE’s contribution starts with a ‘participatory needs assessment’, which is an inventory of community needs and member participation. The actual partnership depends on the current stage of the community. SCORE recognises 4 stages of capacity-building:

1. access through awareness and sports activities
2. skills-building – workshops and training sessions that enhance sports skills (as players, trainers or referees), life skills (communication and self-assertion sessions, healthcare information) and leadership and management skills (sports administration, application procedures, financial management)
3. building sports organisations and sports structures
4. building a support network (partnerships).

Success factors

Developing and advancing leadership within a community is essential for the approach to succeed. Identifying leaders and offering them good prospects is paramount. These leaders become the new ‘local experts’. They are responsible for continuing the effort to build capacity in their own and other communities via the SCORE network. In the process, they acquire new skills and experiences that help them serve as role models.

Based on experience, SCORE recognises the following success factors for building lasting capacity:

- Capacity-building should address the needs of the community. SCORE has a ‘training menu’ and an intervention curriculum that is adapted continuously to meet the specific needs of the community. There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach.
- The actual process is the means to guarantee a long-term, lasting effect. Continuous support and coaching are pivotal in this process.
- Capacity-building is crucial at both individual and institutional levels and is conducive to structures within which these individuals operate.
- Such a process requires expertise and quality from the implementing or development organisation and continuous involvement from the partners.
• Local involvement of and ownership by the community are essential.
• Partnerships should be with sports structures and organisations, as well as areas outside sports, for example with development practitioners, such as with HIV/AIDS specialists.

Suggestions from practice

• Continue to focus on the basics (the actual sport, the athletes and the volunteer sports trainers) in building your structure. This will ensure continuity and a leadership system.
• The actual process is critical. Procedural approaches are often incompatible with ‘logical frameworks’ and financial annual plans. In many cases a project is more appropriate.
• Good and responsible leadership is essential at all levels.
• Manage expectations. Be realistic about what is possible with respect to the community, implementation of programmes and partners and donors.
• Synchronise the partnership programme with local, regional, national and/or international initiatives.
• Monitoring and evaluation are important but should remain relevant and user-friendly. They should be an integrated management tool to support implementation processes effectively, not be an objective in their own right.

Many years of experience have made SCORE a stronger partner for other organisations active in sports and development cooperation. In several cases, people trained by SCORE at community levels now contribute to other projects in different countries. SCORE now focuses primarily on using these human resources in southern Africa, for example to support South-South and South-North exchange projects.

Example

The Zone VI Youth Games in Namibia in 2006 are but one of the recent successful partnerships. At these games the best 20 athletes under age 20 from the 14 southern countries of Africa (SADC – Southern African Development Community) compete. This sports event is organised by the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, known as Zone VI. At these games, SCORE was responsible for recruiting, training and managing 300 young volunteers from Namibia. SCORE used leaders and trainers from other programmes in the region to this end. The partnership between SCORE and the Namibian Ministry of Sport and the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa (Zone VI) made this sports event a success.

In conclusion, UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy has stated:
‘Effective collaboration can only happen if we, the major stakeholders of sports for development – governments, the sports world, NGOs, UN agencies – possess the capacity to share ideas and information in a continuous and efficient way...plan together and coordinate among ourselves the key actions that further sports for development...’