Sport & Development
A summary of SAD’s experiences and good practices
Managing Social Change and Cultural Diversity

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Swiss Academy for Development SAD
Boezingenstrasse 71
CH-2505 Biel/Bienne

Phone. +41 32 344 30 50
Fax +41 32 341 08 10
Web www.sad.ch
E-Mail info@sad.ch

Impressum
Publisher: SAD
Authors: Mithra Akhbari, Valeria Kunz, Usha Selvaraju, Ruveni Wijesekera
Orders: Swiss Academy for Development, Boezingenstrasse 71, CH-2502 Biel/Bienne
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SPORT & DEVELOPMENT
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1. Introduction

The field of Sport & Development

International development organisations have increasingly begun to look to sport as an instrument for reaching development goals, including the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There are now high expectations of sport, with large development potential ascribed to it. Sport is considered to be beneficial in developing social and emotional competencies by nurturing individual traits including self-esteem and communication skills, as well as instilling values such as fair play, teamwork and tolerance. Sport is being applied to address various issues, including: overcoming trauma of civil war or natural disasters; integrating marginalised groups; creating health awareness; promoting peace and/or conflict transformation; and fostering education and gender equity.

The International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005 (IYSPE 2005) was a milestone in the establishment of the field of “Sport & Development”. Sport & Development has produced influential dynamics reflected in the diversity of Sport & Development projects being implemented around the world, reflected in government and multilateral institutions’ programmes and policies, as well as among sports associations and within the private sector, as a part of their corporate social responsibility efforts.

SAD’s involvement in Sport & Development

Tasked with the management of the first Magglingen Conference in February 2003, SAD has been involved in the field of Sport & Development since the beginning. Since then, SAD has contributed to the validation and operationalisation of the field by examining both the positive and negative roles of sport in development scientifically. Besides the implementation, oversight, and evaluation of operational projects, SAD seeks to develop theoretical principles and practical instruments for development cooperation in the field of Sport & Development. This is done by means of applied research and through the implementation of pilot projects, which help us provide answers to the following questions which guide our engagement in the Sport & Development field:

- How does sport work to achieve social aims?
- How are projects best designed to have the greatest impact?
- What factors in the planning and execution of projects are most likely to produce successful outcomes?
- What instruments are most appropriate in the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) of Sport & Development projects?

About this report

This report provides an overview of four selected SAD Sport & Development projects that examine the use of sport as a tool for reaching development and humanitarian objectives. This report aims to uncover the development potential of sport in three post-conflict projects and one post-disaster project, each with varied aims and objectives, ranging from psychosocial rehabilitation and inter-ethnic dialogue to non-formal education. The selected projects take place in different geographical locations and in highly diverse social and cultural contexts.

Each project overview provides:

- background information about the project, its context and main objectives
- an evaluation of the ‘added value’ of sport and play in the project
- a summary of experiences and good practices that have emerged from the project

The final chapter sums up the most important findings and experiences and helps to identify a number of trends, which can be drawn from the experience of SAD in the field of Sport & Development.
2. SAD’s Sport & Development projects

2.1 Sport and play for traumatized children and youth in Bam, Iran

By Valeria Kunz, Project manager

2.1.1 About the project

In the field of humanitarian assistance, sport and play have gained attention as innovative instruments to support the psychosocial rehabilitation process in post-disaster situations. The project ‘Sport and play for traumatized children and youth’, implemented by the Swiss Academy for Development after the earthquake in Bam, Iran in 2004; was a pilot project conducted in this field.

Using sport and other game-based activities, the project was intended to offer children and youth a stable pastime structure; to provide them with the opportunity to channel emotions; to improve their mental and physical wellbeing; and to promote values such as teamwork and fair play that are the basis of a peaceful environment.

The activities were run in two protected warehouses in two refugee camps and in a sports stadium in a nearby village. Coaches, who had been recruited from the local population, were running the sport and play activities with the children. Sports such as football, volleyball, basketball, gymnastics, karate, and table tennis were offered by the coaches in 12 different classes. On average, about 20 children and youth participated in every class. Over the course of 2005, daily recreational activities were expanded to include information and education on health, nutrition and drugs, as well as conflict management and violence prevention programmes. Parallel to this, workshops were offered to further educate the coaches in sport didactics and psychosocial issues.

From December 2005 onwards, the camps were gradually dissolved and most families moved back to Bam or nearby villages. In order to ensure its long-term sustainability, the project was transferred into local structures. Since 2006, a local project management team (mainly consisting of the former coaches) is running the activities with the children and youth. Thanks to the support of the authorities and generous donors, a new sports centre was opened in Bam, in which the activities are now held.

2.1.2 Evaluation of the added value of sport and play

The project was evaluated in 2006 by SAD. Structured reports filled in weekly by the coaches were the main sources of monitoring data as well as interviews conducted with parents.

During the first two to three months, the coaches described the participating children and youth as being very nervous and the atmosphere in the classes was perceived as hostile. Both boys and girls showed physical and verbal aggression - they would hit each other and pull each other’s hair, instigate verbal attacks on each other and make fun of weaker participants. It was difficult for the coaches to control participants in order to be able to conduct activities with them. The nervous, disorganised, ‘agitated’ behaviours and the hostile and aggressive conduct correspond to the typical reactions of school-aged children to traumatic events and can thus be related to what they had experienced.

The nervous and sometimes aggressive behaviour stands in sharp contrast with the high motivation of children and youth to participate in the project activities. When asked about their motivation for participation in a survey in October 2005, all of the 50 respondents fully agreed with the statement ‘Sport and play activities are very important to me’, and 96% of them agreed with the statement ‘I am usually looking forward to go to the sports and play activities’. Interestingly, 54% of the interviewed children did not agree with the statement ‘The main thing is to have fun’ – a source of motivation that we would generally expect when children do sport and play together. But in their situation, it seems that being able to engage in sport and play has a more serious importance than just doing it for fun. The statement of a girls’ volleyball coach in one of the camps in May 2005 exemplifies this:

“As they are telling me now, this centre has become their second home and they depend on coming to class. They are saying that they gain peace and relaxation here. These things give me new energy to go on with the work!”

1 The results of this evaluation are summarized in the report ‘Sport and play for traumatized children and youth. An assessment of a pilot project in Bam, Iran by the Swiss Academy for Development (SAD)’, see ‘http://www.sad.ch/images/stories/Publikationen/bam_report_web.pdf’.
The activities seemed to support the psychological rehabilitation process of the participating children and youth. All coaches observed improvements in fairness and in dealing with aggression among the children and youth over time. They learned to play together supporting each other in learning exercises or in including newcomers or younger children instead of playing aggressively, making fun of weaker participants, and insulting each other. The girls’ table tennis and basketball coaches described this development in spring 2005:

“What was interesting here was that there was no entertainment or any other place for children, so when they came to the class they were just trying to grab the ball and play by themselves but now they are fond of playing with each other.”

“We have developed a good team spirit so far and it is working well; there is a sense of team play while they are practicing and playing – it has improved a lot, maybe not a big change to last week, but much from the first months!”

Even in the most difficult classes, the boys’ football classes in the two camps, there was improvement over time. The boys showed more respect towards the coaches and accepted the rules they set. For instance, they would apologize when they had insulted each other upon the coaches noticing. Through learning to accept the rules of the game, it seemed that the boys gradually channelled some of their individual aggression into a sense of competition on the team level. "This week it seems better, at least the struggles were among the teams and only a few of them were among team members,” one of the boys’ football coaches stated in February 2005.

The team spirit that developed among the children and youth during the sport and play activities also spread to their daily lives. Many participants met with each other outside the project activities. They formed groups to learn for school exams together and became friends. Such processes were especially important in the two camps where the children often did not know any other children and families from different areas of origin often had conflicts with one another.

Improvements could be observed not only on the group level, but also on the level of individual children and youth who were particularly affected. At the beginning, mentally or physically-affected children and youth were often made fun of by the others. Through the team activities and the integrative measures of the coaches, such as appointing them as their ‘coaching assistant’ or giving them other specific tasks; these participants managed to strengthen their self-confidence and were gradually respected in the group. One of the boys’ football coaches stated in May 2005, “We had nervous and depressed children, who are now very different from the early days.” Most parents interviewed in March 2005 also observed an improvement in the physical and mental wellbeing of their children. The following statements illustrate this:

“Before, she was very nervous and she was losing her temper over nothing, but now she is more calm and patient.”

“My son is very shy. Before, he hardly get along with the others, but now he's made some friends there and seems more confident in expressing himself”
“Before, she was very depressed and now she has improved a lot; she is excited and she is getting along with her sisters better now.”

“She is happier, that’s what I can see in her behaviour.”

The coaches mention positive individual examples in some of the weekly reports. For example, a boy in one of the camps who had lost his brother in an accident, came back to the football class one week later. According to his coach, he mentioned that the only way he could forget what happened was to come to the centre to play with his friends. Another very positive example is the case of a girl who had fallen from a roof during the earthquake and suffered both physically and mentally from that experience. Because she developed so well during her participation in the table tennis and volleyball classes, the coaches mentioned her improvements recurrently in the weekly reports. In January 2005, her coaches stated:

“She has fallen from the roof and it has affected her memory, so she would prefer to play alone and not with anybody, so I talked to her and tried to be her friend and now she is coming to the class regularly. Her mother said that she has been better from the time she began to attend the class.”

“To me, it is a nice experience, because I am seeing the difference in the participants’ behaviour comparing to the first sessions, even there is one girl who has mental problems [the girl who had fallen from a roof] and now mostly when we come, she is sitting behind the door waiting for us.”

“The improvement is obvious in the behaviour of that girl with mental problems and the happiness her mother showed made me happy too.”

Three months later, one of her coaches said:

‘She is now one of our good players and she has lots of friends compared to the first days when she was not getting along with anybody.’

Apparently, the attempts of both coaches to integrate this girl into the classes, to improve her self-confidence and to be a trusted person for her, were vital to this success. In their statements below, the coaches describe how they let the girl take over some responsibilities in class, thereby giving her more self-confidence and greater appreciation from other participants:

“[The girl] was present this week and she was helping me a lot and I can say as I have mentioned before, she has improved a lot in comparison to the last few weeks.”

“She’s also been given some responsibilities to give her more self-confidence.”

Her mother has also observed considerable improvement. Interviewed in March 2005, she said:

“My daughter had some mental problems as she had fallen from a roof, but from the time she is going to the classes, she has changed a lot. She’s trying to be more kind to her friends and she is helping me at home. Even her grades at school have improved.”

Another indicator for positive development is that after some months, a trusted relationship between the coaches and the participants could be established in almost all classes. When asked about their relationship with their coaches in October 2005 in the gender-survey, 49 out of 50 participants fully agreed with the statement ‘My coach is like a friend to me’. 74% of the participants interviewed in the survey fully agreed with the statement: ‘I usually share my private problems with my coach’. The coaches and the local project manager became trusted persons for the children and youth; coaches were entrusted with their personal or familial problems, their fears and sorrows. When participants had to choose what kind of characteristics they found most important for a coach, the features ‘understanding and caring about people’ were the most often-mentioned (compared to ‘good in sports’ and ‘setting strict rules’) by both girls and boys.

The role of the coach as a trusted adult besides the parents was very important for the children. Not only could the children approach the coaches with their problems and receive support from them in finding solutions, the coaches also served as role models, providing them with guidance and orientation. Coaches were also able to relieve parents, who were often stressed and helpless in how to assist their children in overcoming their traumatic experiences. This often led to tensions between the parents and their children. For instance, the parents often did not understand why their children had such difficulty in concentrating at school and brought home poor grades. Many parents proceeded to punish their children by not allowing them to join the sports activities anymore. The coaches were able to act as mediators between parents and children in such situations. They talked to parents to explain that weaker school performance could be related to the mental suffering the children had undergone during the earthquake. They also stressed that the children’s current living conditions and their participation in sports activities could help them feel and
perform better at school. Because most parents came to realize that their children greatly enjoyed attending the sports activities (which initiated changes in their behaviour) they also respected the coaches in their role as mediators.

2.1.3 Experiences and best practices

Looking at these evaluation results, it can be concluded that sport and play had a positive impact on the wellbeing and development of the participating children. All parents, coaches and members of the project management team observed significant changes in the children’s behaviour and in their group dynamics, which can be taken as indicators for an improvement in their physical and mental wellbeing. Initial aggression and hostility was channelled through sport and play activities into cooperative team play. Through appropriate measures taken by the coaches, weaker or mentally absent participants who were made fun of in the beginning could be integrated into the groups, thereby enhancing their self-confidence and wellbeing. The sport and play activities became an important part of the children's lives, bringing them some stability. Friendships emerged that spread into daily life. The activities were not only very much appreciated by the children themselves, but also by their parents, who were relieved to have educational and mental support for their children; thereby further stabilizing family relationships.

However, the positive effects cannot be isolated to the use of sport alone. Our findings suggest that the coaches and their efforts to create a supportive environment play a crucial role in using sport and play as effective instruments for supporting the post-disaster psychosocial rehabilitation process of children and youth. Without coaches who are sensitive to the physical and mental wellbeing of the children in their classes and who are able to take adequate measures in order to build a team spirit – which is based not on competition or individual performance but on respect, tolerance and the inclusion of all children – sport would not have contributed to such positive effects in the aftermath of the Bam earthquake.

The selection and training of the coaches should hence not focus too much on their experience in sports coaching. Instead, attention must be given to their motivation and ability to fulfil their role as a trusted adult person for the children. This can then help the children to turn to the coaches with their problems and sorrows. The coaches can help them gain more self-confidence and trust other people again, experience fun in a group activity, and forget their sorrows.

To enhance mutual exchange and build trust among the participating children, the following measures, which were applied by the coaches; proved effective. In order to strengthen the cohesion among the children and youth, it was helpful to incorporate other games besides the scheduled sport into the lessons. Various group games were introduced by some of the coaches at the beginning of every lesson for the children and youth to ‘arrive’ in class, to concentrate on the sports activities, and to involve them in the group. External activities besides the classes, such as tournaments with other teams or a picnic in the countryside, were also very much appreciated by them and helped to establish friendly relationships between the participants. Because it was possible for newcomers to join existing classes at any time, it was sometimes difficult to strengthen team spirit between the participants. Effective measures to integrate newcomers were to make former participants responsible for introducing the new ones into the activities and into the group or to form smaller sub-groups, in which a team spirit was easier to establish.
The coaches are not only responsible for the friendly atmosphere in the sports lesson, but also hold the role as trusted persons for the children and as intermediate agents between them and their parents. To establish a trusted relationship between coaches and participants, several methods were applied which helped to improve mutual exchange. It was helpful, for instance, to invite participants to write (anonymous) letters to their coaches, if they wanted to. Thereby, even children who did not dare to address the coach directly, were offered a chance to express what was on their mind. For boys, hesitance to talk to their coaches about personal problems was further reinforced by socio-cultural ideals of masculinity, according to which boys should not talk openly about their feelings and problems, especially not to adult men. Letters did not prove effective here since they were considered ‘girlish things’ by most boys. However, forms of indirect mutual exchange with their coaches did nevertheless emerge in the boys’ classes. They mostly did not approach the coach themselves, but other boys of the class told the coach if one of their friends had a problem so that the coach could go and talk to that boy. Another useful method for both girls and boys were the ‘friendship circles’ at the end of every lesson, in which the coach discussed selected topics such as fairness, mutual trust and health issues with participants and addressed problems that many of them were facing individually in a more general group setting. The coaches also actively sought out dialogue with children whom they felt were in trouble.

The fact that the coaches were recruited from the local population was a major advantage in developing a relationship of mutual trust and respect. As locals, the coaches were more respected by the children and their parents. They knew the children’s situation, shared the same experiences, and could visit each other easily outside the project activities. It was this personal closeness that allowed the coaches to act as legitimate mediators. However, due to the high responsibility that the coaches bear for the success of the project, it should not be forgotten that the local coaches experienced the traumatizing disaster as well. It is likely that they suffer from its consequences in a similar way as the participating children and their parents. This adds to their ability to empathize with the children and parents, but also requires continued support: not only concerning the project activities, but also concerning their own mental state (e.g. through regular exchanges with the other coaches) so that their task does not become too heavy a burden for them to carry. Moreover, the project management should accompany the activities closely through a monitoring system, which involves the coaches in a participatory way and provides them with the regular opportunity to talk about possible problems. Solutions can then be sought when problems arise and not only when they have already manifested themselves.
2.2 Sport and play for Lebanese children and youth affected by conflict

By Mithra Akhbari, Project manager

2.2.1 About the project

The Swiss Academy for Development launched the project Sport and Play for Lebanese Children and Youth Affected by Conflict in cooperation with the Lebanese NGO Oum el Nour at the beginning of 2007. After a pilot phase of two years (January 1st, 2007 - December 31, 2008), the activities were in part handed over to local structures.

The objective of the project was to help overcome emotional stress and enhance the psychosocial rehabilitation of children and youth affected by conflict through guided sport activities. By means of sport and other game-based interventions, children and youth were provided with structured leisure time to help channel emotions, frustration and aggression, improve mental and social wellbeing, promote values such as teamwork and fair-play as well as provide orientation.

Activities were implemented in the Southern suburbs of Beirut, in the region of Dahieh in two public schools: one for girls and one for boys; as well as on public and private playgrounds of UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) schools. The region of Dahieh has always been in the centre of internal conflicts in Lebanon and was also very much affected by the war in the summer of 2006. Each of the partner schools had between 300 and 500 pupils at the time the activities were initiated. The project also included children and youth from a Palestinian refugee camp. Although all locations in which activities were carried out are geographically close to one another, the socio-cultural differences between the participants are enormous. A great disparity could be seen between the Lebanese participants and the children from the Palestinian refugee camp. There were also differences in this regard between a mainly Muslim girls’ school and the partner schools, in which participants were more mixed along confessional lines.

Participation in the extra-curricular sport and play activities was on a voluntary basis and the activities were organized in an open manner. New participants as well as children and youth from the neighbourhood could join the activities at any time. In each of our partner schools, activities were carried out twice a week.

A total of 120 children and young adults, between the age of 7 and 18, participated regularly in the activities. In accordance with the wishes of the participants, activities such as football, volleyball, basketball, handball, gymnastics and Taekwondo were offered. The activities and games were combined with learning social competences including information and education on health, substance abuse, as well as conflict management and violence prevention.

2.2.2 Evaluation of the added value of sport and play

The project has been accompanied by a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) programme, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Sources of the end-evaluation were a quantitative survey administered to participants and a control group, weekly questionnaires completed by the coaches and guideline-interviews conducted with parents of participants in March 2008. The measures were implemented in order to assess the impacts of sport programmes on social and personal development of the targets. In addition to traditional M&E tools, a creative participatory photo monitoring exercise was piloted in an experimental way and compared to other monitoring instruments.

As data from the M&E programme has indicated, the project met the need of young people from socially and economically under-privileged families for organised extra curricula and leisure time activities. The majority of the participants did not participate in other organized leisure time activities. For those kids the programme was a meaningful alternative to structure their free time in a creative manner. Children and young people participated with great enthusiasm in the activities and enjoyed it very much. It could be witnessed from the coaches’ reports that in the running of the time, the programme has become an important part in their every day lives. In case of postponement or cancellation of the activities due to security reasons, the participants were not only disappointed, but also asked that activities were compensated at a later stage.

The experiences and results of the photo monitoring are summarized in the report „Evaluating Psychosocial Sport Programmes: A Pilot Study Using Photo Monitoring in the Context of the Project ‘Sport and Play for Lebanese Children and Youth Affected by Conflict’“, see:

The reasons for participating in the programme were manifold. Generally, the most important aspect of the programme for all the participants were the friendships and social relations they established through the activities as well as the fun they had in participating and at the same time get some respite from their daily situation. In comparison to the girls, boys gave much more importance to the sporting aspects of the activities: the fitness, the training, the skills they were taught, the rules and discipline. For the Palestinian participants, leave the refugee camp once in a while was an additional motivation to participate in the programme. This aspect was on the one hand emphasized by the parents, and on the other hand it could be seen and interpreted from the photo monitoring reports. The pictures of the Lebanese participants mainly concentrated and focused on the sport and play activities while the photos taken by the Palestinians showed frequently scenes of the surroundings, the nature, and the playground etc.

Interestingly, it was in one of the boys' schools where comments such as 'everybody is included' and 'I like to be part of a team' were registered repeatedly. The reason for this distinctive feature may be explained by the fact that in this school, the participants were significantly more religiously mixed than in the other locations where activities were taking place. Religious segregation or the question of social inclusion/exclusion was clearly seen as an issue at this specific school. When we started with the activities, there were only participants from one religious group on the first day. In the following class students from other religious groups also came to have a look on the new activities. The responsible local trainers, from different religious backgrounds themselves, could successfully integrate all the participants into the activities, as could also be witnessed in the reports by the parents. For example one of our participants changed school some months before we started with the activities and felt very isolated as a newcomer. Thanks to the extra-curricular sport activities he made new friends, which was also mentioned by his mother:

“I see how much he loves sport, which has made him belong to a non-sectarian team...Before the project started he was not very happy in his new school, since it is very sectarian and he was not raised in such a mentality: Muslims and Christians sit at separate desks! This is why he was very happy in the sport activities since all sectarian boundaries disappeared and everyone was just one big team.”

The importance of the established friendships and the feeling of being integrated in a team were also underlined by the quantitative research, which pointed to the fact that participants of the sport activities felt significantly less socially marginalized at the end of the programme than at the beginning. As the same effect could not be detected among the control group of the research sample, the effect can be regarded as an outcome of the programme activities. It again underlines the importance of friendships being established through the activities.

In most of the classes the atmosphere amongst the participants was friendly from the beginning; however the coaches instantly noticed the difficulties the participants had to phrase and express their feelings, their fears and their opinions. In the course of the programme the coaches were able to develop and to boost the social competences, such as self-confidence and self-esteem of the participants. Conflicts between some individuals only surfaced after several weeks or even months. It was essential that the programme integrated issues of conflict transformation and non-violent response to conflicts so that any disagreements
could be solved in a constructive and fair manner. The participants learned to cope with conflicts under the supervision of the coaches, which in the long run furthered the team spirit amongst the participants and enhanced the trust between them.

In some classes with participants exposed to very precarious living conditions, the implementation of the activities turned out to be a challenge for the coaches. The interaction among the children was very aggressive and conflicts were solved immediately in a violent manner: For example, the children started throwing stones at each other. Being familiar with the precarious living conditions of some participants, who are used to being exposed to violent and armed conflicts, the aggressive behaviour is understandable. Additionally, most of the participating children were not used to playing games and sports under the supervision of a coach or trainer. Regardless of this problematic condition, coaches observed a decreasing tendency of aggression amongst the children and an increase in being treated more respectfully by the participants. In the running of the programme the children also started to understand that the time they spend arguing will leave less time for playing and having fun and the coaches successfully managed to create a sense of trust between themselves and the children.

The majority of the parents observed positive changes in the behaviour of their children since they were participating in the programme. Most parents stated that they were less bored and complained less about being without meaningful tasks because they had an activity to focus on. In addition, the parents perceived that their children were calmer and more balanced and argued less with their siblings. Another point mentioned by various parents was the new friendships built through the activities and a better team spirit. One mother can be quoted:

„I have noticed a change in many things, particularly in her team spirit. I can see that from the way she plays with her friends in the neighbourhood and also with her brothers. I also know she has made new friends."

Also the parents could observe changes in self-esteem:

„...I feel he is less shy than before. He argues with me more, as if to impose himself. I’m not bothered at all by this; I want him to have a strong personality."

Congruent to the experiences and outcomes of similar projects, the findings of this programme once again emphasised the central position of the coach for the success of the psychosocial sports activities. In the beginning, coaches were treated like teachers but the relationship between them and the participants developed progressively into friendship. Coaches became role models to whom the participants felt closely attached and whom they could trust. After some months, the participants even started to share their intimate and private problems with their coaches. Problems within the family and difficulties at school were the major issues discussed with the coaches.

Another example demonstrating the important position of the coaches are the pictures taken during the photo monitoring: most of the pictures taken by the participants show the coaches.

Congruent to the data collected through the photo monitoring, the findings of the parents’ interviews also underlined the central position of the coaches for the project. No matter if the parents were in personal contact with the coaches or not, from the way their children talked about them, they knew that the coaches had become an important reference to their children. As they only heard positive things, they had the feeling that their children are in good hands during the activities, like these mothers:

“I hear their names a lot...I think it is a very healthy atmosphere, and coaches treat the children with great respect.”

“He praises the coaches constantly and respects them immensely. He keeps telling me how they treat him like a friend, and take care of everyone.”

“Georgette visited me for lunch and I liked her. I wanted to meet the coaches, since I hear so much about them...She [daughter] is very relaxed with them...When I told her I was going to meet them, my daughter told me ‘please mom be nice to them, I like them!’”

A good part of the parents appreciated the pedagogical aspect of the project very much and felt supported by the activities and the work of the coaches in raising their children, like this father who often came to watch the activities:

“I am aware of how the young people and the coaches treat each other, and I like what I see. There is respect for the authority of the coaches, and it is important for maintaining order...I would like to thank you for this project that protects young people from many life-threatening dangers. Your interest makes parents feel comfortable in knowing there is someone helping them to raise their children in a healthy manner; both mind and body.”
Some parents who had personal contacts with the coaches mentioned sharing problems or concerns regarding their children with the coaches:

“I meet the coaches in the neighbourhood and like to talk and share with them my son’s problems.”

2.2.3 Experiences and best practices

Sport for development programmes do not operate in a vacuum: they are taking place in a socio-cultural environment, which affects the programme at any time, positively and negatively. It is therefore essential to take all contextual aspects into consideration already in the planning phase of a project to minimize negative influences from outside and to include the needed flexibility to adapt the activities as well as the M&E programme in an adequate manner if necessary.

In the Lebanese context for example, we were repeatedly confronted with a highly tense security situation, due to social and political tensions in the country. As a consequence, activities were cancelled from time to time for security reasons. Additionally, some parents did not allow their children to participate in the activities momentarily due to the conflict-riddled situation; this was especially the case with female participants. Accordingly, all parents expressed concerns regarding the actual security situation in the country during the interviews. Because of the conflict-ridden situation they would have preferred that their children come home directly after school. Nevertheless, they allowed their children to participate, because they felt how important the activities were for them.

Parents of participants in children and youth empowerment and educational programmes play an essential role, as they give their children the permission to participate. Measures that build trust between parents and coaches, which were taken at the beginning of the project, have been very helpful in this regard. For example, the parents had been informed about the project and its aims in advance. Good cooperation with the partner schools has also been very helpful in this aspect. Two of our partner schools appreciated the initiative of the extra-curricular activities on their playgrounds very much. Although they were not directly involved, they supported the organisers in contacting the parents, promoting the activities, which seems to have had an impact on the number of participants. In others schools in which the school directories were less supportive, there were fewer participants.

To invest in the establishment of a personal relationship between the coaches and the parents was an asset in enhancing the trust of the parents towards the programme. Not all parents were in personal contact with the coaches, but as it turned out from the interviews all parents knew their names and had their cell phone numbers in case of emergency or dangerous situations due to the low security in the area during the war.

From time to time we organised public events to which parents were also invited, as for example a photo exhibition with the pictures and stories taken by the participants during the photo monitoring. Public events were a good opportunity to bring participants and their parents from different social backgrounds together and provide them with the possibility of sharing their experiences of the programme. It was very interesting
to observe participants showing the pictures to their parents and explaining to them in detail what they were doing during the activities.

Last but not least, it has to be mentioned that parents’ interviews are not only useful as an M&E tool. They also function as a trust building component. Parents who have not been in personal contact with the project management before will do that through the interviews and get the possibility to ask everything they would like to know about the project as well as to place their concerns and wishes regarding the activities.

Trust building measures towards the parents and context adapted gender sensitivity was of great importance for the inclusion of girls from traditional family backgrounds into the activities. Leisure time opportunities of those girls are very limited and as M&E data has pointed out some of them are not allowed to meet their friends outside after school time. Providing activities supervised by only female coaches and in a school environment considered safe by the parents has proved to be effective. In combination with the trust-building measures mentioned above, it convinced sceptical parents to let their girls participate in the activities. For those girls, it was the first time they had the opportunity to participate in regular leisure time activities and to meet habitually with peers.
2.3 Sport and play for Inter-ethnic Dialogue among Children and Youth in Sri Lanka

By Ruveni Wijesekera, Project Manager

2.3.1. About the project

Sport and play for Dialogue is a joint project implemented by Swiss Academy for Development (SAD) and the Sri Lankan NGO Future Peace (FP). The project has been running since June 2009 in eight Sinhalese and Tamil villages in the Monaragala District in Sri Lanka. Children and youth between the age of 8 and 18 from one Sinhalese and one Tamil village have come together and formed ‘mixed child clubs’; four of these mixed child clubs have been established with approx. 300 children and youth in total. Sport and play activities are conducted two to three times a week by coaches (Sinhalese, Tamil, male, female) who had been selected from the project locations. The coaches have been trained in sport didactics, conflict transformation and monitoring and evaluation.

The pilot project provides children and youth exposed to the rising tension in the area with life skills and non-formal education which are not taught in school or at home: children are taught to deal with differences and conflicts in a non-violent manner through the use of sport; fair play and respect for others are developed while emotional stability is strengthened by promoting their self-confidence and resilience. The overall objective of the project is to build capacities and encourage the social inclusion of children and youth on ethnic and gender lines in an increasingly volatile area of Sri Lanka (the Monaragala district), with the view of replicating the approach in higher-conflict areas.

Sport and play serves as an appropriate tool to promote dialogue in a post-conflict context such as Sri Lanka where direct dialogue is not feasible. Sport provides a “safe” space for coming together. Children and youth serve as a perfect entry point to involve parents, key leaders and the extended village communities into the project. Additionally, “Sport and play for Dialogue in Sri Lanka” is one of the very few interventions that focuses on measuring the effectiveness of sport and play as a tool for promoting life-skills and inter-ethnic dialogue.

2.3.2 Evaluating the added value of sport and play

Together with the local organisation “Future Peace”, a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system was established. Relevant indicators to measure the progress and success of the intervention were identified. The M&E system assesses the effectiveness of the project’s innovative approach of using sport as a tool to educate the younger generation in non-violent conflict management and in promoting dialogue. A comprehensive survey, using a pre-test-post-test design, is applied to measure the changes in the psychosocial development of children participating in the programme as well as the inter-ethnic relationships between children and youth and their parents. A baseline study was conducted by the local project team prior to the start of sport and play activities and a post-test was conducted eight months after the activities began. Apart from qualitative interview trainings, the local project team was introduced to creative M&E methods (consisting of play and game-based components) that are used to assess how children and youth experience the project activities and which developments they have undergone. Project planning is regularly adapted according to the M&E results. The bi-monthly monitoring visits of the national project manager provide the district project manager and the coaches with on-the-spot feedback and guidance. A final evaluation will be conducted at the end of the pilot phase of the project. The lessons learned from the pilot phase will form the basis for mainstreaming the approach within the partner organisation and other NGOs in Sri Lanka as well as for subsequent replication and scaling up of the project in other “hot spot” conflict areas.

The objective of assessing the effectiveness of sport and play as a tool in conflict transformation is an ongoing process, which lasts until the end of the project duration. It is therefore still too early to present evidence based results which reveal the added value of sport at this moment in time when the sport and play activities have only been running for a short period of eight months.

However, achievements on three different levels could be observed since the start of the field activities in September 2009: on the level of coaches, on the level of children/youth and on the level of parents and the broader community. First, it is not possible to attribute all the achievements only to sport and play. Second, it is still too early to gain evidence-based results on the behavioural changes of children and inter-ethnic relationship among children as well as on the parents’ level. Hence, most of the following accounts of progress are based on the observations of the local project team and is largely anecdotal.
The most significant achievement has been the establishment of a highly motivated and passionate local project team. For instance, when the local project team realised that the budgeted amount for the New Year Festival would in fact cover only 30% of the costs, they made a great effort to collect the money within the villages and from their friends and relatives. When the collected amount was still not sufficient, they donated half of their small monthly salaries to make the festival a success. One of the coaches commented:

“We have profited so much from the project for the past ten months. Now it is time for us to give something back.”

At the start of the activities in September 2009, parents from both ethnic groups were reluctant to send their children to the other village to participate in the project activities. However, thanks to local project teams’ trust building measures with parents and key leaders, the number of children/youth from both ethnic groups has grown rapidly from 130 to approximately 300 in the past 8 months. One coach states:

“At the beginning, Tamil children and Singhalese children were quite hesitant to play together. They used to play separately in their own group. Now they are playing together as one group and many of them attend the activities regularly.”

The same applies to girls and boys who were unwilling to play together at the beginning. Ties and friendships among children are gradually developing across ethnic boundaries; they call each other by their names; but friendships across gender boundaries seem more of a challenge for older children and youth. It is still too early to present evidence-based accounts of psychosocial behavioural changes in children and youth. Nonetheless, what has been observed so far is quite positive: many quiet and shy children, who only used to watch the games, have now integrated themselves into the group while some of them even express their ideas and thoughts during the debriefing sessions3. It seems that sport and play has played an essential role not only in bringing together, but also in developing relationships between Singhalese and Tamil children and youth, who have been living next to each other with hardly any contact or relationship with each other in the past. Monitoring data and coaches’ observations reveal that the level of progress in terms of inter-ethnic relationship building and participants’ behavioural changes differs from one child club or village unit4 to another.

The local project team has received many positive responses: some of the key leaders in the neighbouring villages have requested the coaches to come and conduct project activities in their villages as well. It seems

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3 Debriefing sessions are discussion rounds held at the end of each sport and play session. Apart from articulating intercultural topics during these sessions, the coaches also address and facilitate disputes and conflicts that have occurred during the sport session.

4 A village unit consists of one Singhalese and one Tamil village that are located next to each other.
that the project activities are the only kind of organised leisure activities the children and youth in this region have. Hence, sport and play activities are highly attractive not only to children and youth but also to their parents.

Usually, the Singhalese show little or no interest in learning the minority’s language and do not speak the Tamil language. However, this is not the case in the project locations. The sport and play activities have awakened interest and enthusiasm in Singhalese children to learn Tamil. The children and youth in three child clubs have requested the coaches to teach them Tamil. As a result, since February 2010, the coaches are offering Tamil language classes to them.

What could be clearly attributed to sport and play is that it has played a significant role as an entry point in reaching Singhalese and Tamil parents and key leaders and bringing them together. One example for this is the one-day joint sport and play event and the New Year festival: Every three months, two child clubs (four villages) located close to each other jointly carry out their sport and play activities as one-day events with the involvement of parents, so that the participants have the opportunity of sharing their experiences and developing ties beyond their own child club. Approx. 250 Tamil and Singhalese children and youth participated in the first of these events. Singhalese and Tamil mothers, on their own initiative, jointly prepared lunch for the participants during a parallel cooking get-together.

Through the New Year Festival, the project has been even more successful in actively involving parents and the relevant stakeholders and thus winning their confidence into the project and its activities. The joint celebration of the New Year Festival organised by the project was a novelty in the whole of Sri Lanka since the New Year Festival is usually celebrated in a festive manner only among the Singhalese. This initiative has been successful in bringing together about 2000 Singhalese and Tamils from the 8 villages, including the rival political representatives and the provincial chief minister, who have officially expressed their amazement that a New Year Festival could be celebrated in such an inclusive manner with the active involvement of both Singhalese and Tamils. Tamil and Singhalese parents and key leaders started supporting the project team weeks before the actual event took place. The entire village community was involved in organising and carrying out the event. This festival gave the project huge prominence while the participating children and youth have served as good “entry points” for gradually involving their parents and the relevant stakeholders into the dialogue process.

Furthermore, Thaipongal festival (Tamil harvest festival) was celebrated in each Tamil village with the participation of children and youth from the child clubs. It was the first time that this festival ever had Singhalese visitors and the first time for the Singhalese children to have participated in a Thaipongal festival. Tamil village leaders were very impressed by the participation of Singhalese children and youth from the neighbouring village, to which they otherwise have little contact.

2.3.3 Experiences and lessons learned

Sport could very well be used as a tool to promote war and separation; or to promote peace and dialogue. The final result depends very much on how the intervention is designed and implemented. The following section focuses on aspects to be considered especially when planning and implementing a sport and play project for peace-building in a conflict / post-conflict setting.

A participatory approach has been adopted not only for the project design but also for the project management. The project was designed during a 5-day participatory planning workshop that was held in May 2009 in Colombo. A total number of 12 persons from the Future Peace district and national staff participated. The workshop was jointly moderated by the FP national project manager and the SAD project manager. The objectives were defined jointly in this workshop. The active involvement of FP district and national staff in the planning workshop, in designing “their” project and the way it is going to be implemented, has resulted in their strong commitment and ownership towards the project.

The choice of the local partner organisation – a major lesson learned – has played a key role in the success of the project. Since the project is a peace-building project, it is essential and an absolute necessity that both organisations’ concept and vision of conflict transformation and peace-building are compatible with each other.

FP is a small but young and dynamic nation-wide local youth network, focusing on conflict transformation and youth empowerment. Their undying interest and curiosity in learning and trying out new approaches; their openness towards monitoring and evaluation (M&E); and their willingness to critically reflect on the processes within the programme, are the main contributing factors to which the success of the joint partnership and the rapid progress of the project can be attributed. FP’s culture of maintaining an almost flat hierarchy also had a positive effect on the implementation of the project. Such an organisational structure is quite novel compared to the hierarchical organisational structures of many Sri Lankan NGOs. A previous experience has shown that choosing big organisations as project partners that are usually very
hierarchical and conservative is not very appropriate especially for a participatory approach (which is also applied to monitoring and evaluation).

The success of the project rests a great deal in the hands of the coaches, on how they carry out the sport activities and especially on their facilitation, communication and leadership skills. More to the point, the coaches, who are trained to be multipliers, are the primary target group of SAD. Consequently, it was worth spending much time and energy on developing stringent selection criteria and on the selection process of the coaches. Initially, 22 youth (Singhalese, Tamil, female, male) from the FP youth network from the project locations were selected to participate in the first eight-day capacity building training in sport & dialogue conducted by an international trainer specialised in sport and dialogue. Twelve participants were selected as coaches by SAD, FP and the international trainer at the end of the training according to how they conducted the sport and play sessions. The second follow-up four-day training (conducted after five months) was designed according to the field observations and adapted to the needs of the selected coaches. Film and video recording was used to promote self-reflection of the coaches on their work and on their role as a facilitator and coach. Further capacity building was provided in conflict transformation and facilitation and monitoring and evaluation by SAD and FP.

Since the primary focus of the intervention was not sport but to promote dialogue, it is necessary to consider the nature of sport and games that are used. The kind of sport and games used in the project are transformative games (not competitive sports), which provide more space for children and youth in mixed teams (ethnic, gender) to communicate with each other, to come to common agreements and to deal with disputes through discussion. Some of these games are cooperative games in which children learn to cooperate as a team and coordinate with each other. Therefore, coaches gradually take on a facilitator’s role, handing power over to the children and encouraging them to modify games and assign rule definition on their own. Children are also encouraged to reflect on how to modify games to better integrate e.g. girls, weaker players or other participants who have fewer opportunities.

At the end of each sport and play session, a debriefing session is conducted by the coaches to facilitate the conflicts and disputes that occurred during the play session and to address various intercultural themes. Here the children learn to articulate and deal with conflicts through discussion rather than by means of (physical) violence, which had been their habitual way of dealing with conflicts. An important lesson learned is that mere sport and play activities in mixed teams provide a platform of encounter for children and youth from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. However, in order to transform their interethnic encounter into sustainable learnings (e.g. dealing with conflicts in a non-violent manner) and to promote

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5 Some of the main selection criteria were their active involvement in the FP youth network, their attitude towards peace-building in general, their existing social networks in the project locations, their experience in working with children and youth and how they conducted the sport and play activities after the first training. Their past experience in sport was not a selection criterion to become a coach.

6 The main focus of the training was on the basic structure of how to use sports for dialogue and not on numerous different kinds of sports or games.
respect for the other, disputes as well as their cultural differences / similarities need to be separately addressed and dealt with: therefore the debriefing part has proven to be as important as the sport and play part. The level of encounter may remain at a superficial level if the debriefing session is left out.

Despite the two eight-day capacity building trainings in sport and dialogue and various other trainings, one of the remaining challenges at the moment is that the majority of the coaches have not yet unfolded their full potential as sport and dialogue coaches: they are expected to conduct sport and play sessions in a way in which dialogue is promoted, facilitate solution-focused resolution of disputes and simultaneously monitor the changes in interethnic relationships and behavioural changes in children. Carrying out and balancing out all three of these tasks is not at all easy. A further difficulty is that the necessary qualities such as dialogue, conflict facilitation and independent analytical thought are not actively encouraged in the social context in which the coaches work and live. All the more, we have to take into account the long time and the continuous guidance and support needed for a person to relearn and open oneself to become a coach who is able to behave and deliver something completely new. As a strategy to cope with the situation, it was decided that the national project manager would supervise and provide the coaches with guidance and on-the-spot feedback more often.

Last but not least, it helps to keep in mind that sport and play as a tool in conflict transformation may have a limited impact that is restricted to the grassroots level (track three). Having an impact on a political dialogue on track one or two should not be foreseen with this tool. Nonetheless, integrating the sport and play activities (including the debriefing part) into existing, sustainable, local, political structures seem to be a challenge at the moment. One option is to gradually introduce the activities into local schools. This is being planned.
2.4 Move 4 New Horizons. A holistic educational programme for disadvantaged children in Nepal

By Valeria Kunz, Project manager

2.4.1 About the project

Move 4 New Horizons is an education programme for disadvantaged out-of-school children implemented by SAD and the Nepalese Dalit Welfare Organisation (DWO) in Dang District, Nepal. It was started in June 2008 and is planned to run for at least three years in total.

As a main project activity, 15 non-formal education (NFE)-classes are held in different rural villages. They are targeted at children between the age of five and ten years, who had not been able to attend school due to poverty, discrimination and/or conflict. NFE-classes last for nine months and are led by trained facilitators who are recruited from the young village population. They teach the participating children in basic reading, writing and mathematics skills in a child-friendly and non-formal way. In addition, sport and play activities are an integral part of the curriculum. During at least three hours per week, the children are involved in games and exercises outdoors on a playground. The games and exercises are adapted to the children's age and are intended to support the children's development in a holistic way. After nine months, efforts are made to integrate these children into the public school system.

The aim of the project is not only to facilitate children's access to public schools, but also to support the participating children, who have experienced discrimination and conflict in the past, in their psychosocial development at the same time. This rests on the conviction that children can only fully develop their true potential if they have the necessary self-confidence, inner strength, and motivation to overcome the multiple obstacles they face, learn, and advance in life. The integration of sport and play activities serves to strengthen these factors in a way that is non-intrusive and fun.  

2.4.2 Evaluation of the added value of sport and play

"Children like to play. If we include sports in teaching, they learn with fun."

Facilitator of a NFE-class in Dang, Nepal

A first interim evaluation of the project was carried out after one and a half years in November/December 2009. An important milestone was that all children who had attended the first round of NFE classes could be enrolled into schools in May/June 2009. Public school teachers were impressed by their level of knowledge and their entry test results. Some children could immediately be enrolled into higher classes reflecting their age and level of knowledge. Considering that it was exclusively children from underprivileged backgrounds, who were not used to read and write and to sit still in a classroom for several hours a day, the admission of all NFE participants into public schools and the positive feedback, which was received from the teachers, were remarkable successes.

The interim evaluation shows that the project activities did not only result in an admission of all NFE participants to schools, but also that the NFE classes did also prepare the children very well for school: the children were motivated to learn and have acquired the basics in reading, writing and calculating, which will make their start at school much easier. Moreover, they became familiar with a classroom setting: they have learnt to be attentive and disciplined in class, to concentrate and to build trust in a teacher. And finally, they have learnt to integrate into a class of children, to interact with them and to build their own self-confidence.

The changes in behaviour, the improvements in self-confidence and motivation of the children, which have occurred in this short time and which were reported by all facilitators are tremendous. We cannot conclude that this was due to the use of sport and play alone because other factors could also have influenced this.  

7 For a more detailed project description, see ‘http://www.sad.ch/en/ongoing/Move-4-New-Horizons.html’.  
8 The findings of the internal interim evaluation are summarised in the Interim Evaluation Report, which can be found on ‘http://www.sad.ch/images/stories/Projekte/sad_m4nh interim evaluation.pdf’.  
9 The only scientifically sound way to show a causal relationship between the behavioural changes in the children and the use of sport and play activities would have been to run some NFE classes without sport and play activities and to compare the progress of the children in the intervention groups with these control groups after some time. However, ethical and practical considerations (providing all children the opportunity to participate in these activities, giving all facilitators the opportunity to collect experiences with conducting sport and play activities) were rated higher in this case.
But there is strong evidence that the approach of integrating sport and play into the NFE curriculum was supportive in achieving these outcomes: The sport and play activities facilitated a more relaxed atmosphere in the class and a playful interaction between the children, which let them gain trust in others and feel more at ease in the group. This was particularly important at the beginning of the NFE class, when the situation was very new for the children and when most of them were still very shy and did not open up. It was found that the learning progress was slow during the first three months, but improved significantly after two or three months in all NFE classes. Children can only start to learn and concentrate in class if they feel at ease with the environment, if they feel a part of the group and if they see the facilitator not as somebody they have to be afraid of, but as somebody who wants to help them and whom they can trust. Sport and play activities have the potential to strengthen all these factors and to “break the ice” at an initial stage of the NFE classes.

All children who participated in the NFE classes were assessed, answered some questions and made drawings in two “child interviews”, one conducted at the beginning of the NFE classes in October 2008 and one before the children’s graduation in April 2009. When the children were asked to make a drawing of how they see the NFE class, the sport and play activities were very prominent in their drawings. Below are two examples:

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Sport and play activities proved particularly suitable for the integration of children who were insecure, shy or who were living with a mental or physical disability; and who were not used to socializing with other children. Many of these children have apparently found their role in the group through the sport and play activities and this has helped them to feel more self-confident in general. The sport and play activities facilitated the interaction with other children and provided a platform for learning social skills and for strengthening social relations in a non-intrusive and fun way.

There was the case of a boy in the NFE class in a village in Duruwa, for example. Asked by the facilitator about the reasons why he could not go to school, he said:

“No one was there to make me aware to go to school. I didn’t know my parents and I was staying at other people’s house to work. So I could not go to school.”

In the first child interview in October 2008, the facilitator described the boy in her class in Duruwa as follows:

“The child has psychosocial problems because of being away from his parents. His mind is not concentrated towards studying. Sometimes he wets himself in class. But now when he started to enjoy playing with friends, some changes can be seen in him. He doesn’t wet himself as often.”

In April 2009, the facilitator told about the same boy:

“The child was very quiet and avoided talking. He used to wet himself in class without being aware of it. Now he changed this behaviour. He likes more to play than to study.”

In a drawing of himself in the future, the boy revealed his future dreams: He wants to “learn to dance, to sing and to study and become a rich man”.

Another case described by a facilitator was a boy in Purandhara. In October 2008, the facilitator wrote:
"The family is very poor, parents lack the awareness of the importance of education and face many problems, and the child was deprived of education. It is sure that if the opportunity is provided, he will study well and also sports activities help to remember things easily. It seems very practical and effective if children's psychology is understood and taught through sports; they learn more and remember the things through observation."

The child said that he could not go to school before, because he had to look after his little brother and because the school was far away. Asked what he liked most about the NFE class, he said “playing ball and French skipping”. The facilitator described the change in behaviour of this boy in April 2009:

"Changes have been observed in the child's behaviour. He integrates with friends and also actively participates in games. Initially, this boy avoided talking to other children, but now he integrates well with friends."

Asked about the reaction of the boy’s family towards these changes, the facilitator reported:

"Parents say that the NFE class has provided an important contribution to the development of the child. The child was far from getting education because of their weak economic condition and now he is getting good education along with playing various kinds of games."

Many similar cases were reported from the facilitators. Even the children with a physical disability were actively involved in the sport and play activities and could thereby gain trust in themselves and in others. There was a boy in a NFE class in Shantinagar, for example, who had lost one leg. His father had left and his mother is migrating for work, regularly. That is why he is staying at a relative's house. Asked what he liked most about the NFE class, he said:

"I like mostly to study, to play interesting games and to get booklets, pencils and a schoolbag."

The facilitator described the progress and the changes in the boy in the child interview in May 2009 as follows:

"The child curiously participates in the lessons and understands the things taught to him. His learning progress is good. [...] I could observe changes in his behaviour: Initially, he didn’t use to talk to other children much, but now he interacts more with his friends while studying and playing games."

Now the boy wants to become a teacher in the future.

Our experiences underpin existing research findings which show that by playing in interaction with other children, the child learns to gain trust, empathy, respect and tolerance for others and to cooperate, to
manage conflicts, to obey rules and to act within a team. At the same time, the child’s development is supported on an emotional level while playing with others. The child learns to cope with fears and frustrations (using as losing a game), to manage aggression, but also to experience joy, fun and motivation together with other children. With these characteristics, sport and play activities can complement the more formal teaching in the classroom very well and support the development of the children in a more holistic way.

2.4.3 Experiences and best practices

The sport and play activities supported the project’s aim to promote the holistic development of the children and was very well received by the children, their parents and the local project staff. However, it needs to be kept in mind that sport and play activities can also be an arena for hostilities, selfish displays and for the exclusion of weaker children. Much harm can be done, especially to children who already have low self-confidence, if such behaviours are not prevented from the beginning.

The project staff had observed hostilities, fights and selfish behaviour at the beginning of the NFE classes during the sport and play activities. A typical situation was that a child grabbed the ball and wanted to keep it, instead of passing it to others, implying that weaker children were not included in the game.

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to prevent such negative dynamics. Only with her/his active contribution can the added value of sport can be achieved and negative implications (hostilities, exclusion, frustration, etc.) be controlled. Therefore, the facilitator himself/herself needs strong personal and social competences, as well as a good methodology and guidance for assuming this role effectively. A first step for this is that the facilitators understand that sport and play activities are not just a fun side activity, but that they are integrated into the project in order to support specific objectives.

In the case of this project, the objective was to support the development of life skills and to increase the children’s self-confidence and inner strength. A simple model was developed for this purpose, which shows how sport and play activities support the development of children on physical, mental, emotional and social levels. These aspects were always taken up again in the half-yearly facilitators’ trainings and displayed through symbols in the facilitators’ manual, which was developed specifically for this project.

Illustration: Visualization of the four dimensions of child development

In a next step, the trainings and the manual emphasised the role of the facilitator, not only as an “activity manager”, but also as an “ambassador of values” and they explained how values such as respect for others, non-violence, non-exclusion, etc. can be fostered through rituals, commitments, feedback, etc. All too often, technical sports skills dominate when it is about the selection and the training of facilitators in sport for development projects. However, if the sport and play activities with the children should not serve

the purpose of “sport development” (i.e. creating future sports champions), but support the social aims of the project (“sport for development”), social and emotional competences need to receive more emphasis in the selection and training of staff. Being an “activity manager” can be learnt easily, but in order to be an “ambassador of values” at the same time, one has to have the sensitivity and the necessary social and emotional skills to work with children. In addition, training sessions have to strengthen the corresponding didactical skills and offer practical tools to be applied in conducting the sport and play activities with the children. During the remaining course of the project, such efforts will be carried on and tools will be further elaborated and disseminated to inform other similar projects.
3. Summary and conclusions

This report has considered the main findings of four selected SAD projects conducted in the area of Sport & Development. The experiences drawn from the four projects have pointed towards several general trends. These trends include:

- the overall positive impact of the projects on the initial situation
- the central role of the coach and/or facilitator in the projects
- the participatory approach of the projects helping to foster trust and develop ownership
- the combined M&E system bringing together qualitative and quantitative approaches as well as the use of creative M&E, uncovering further aspects of the changes induced by the projects.

Overall Positive Change

All four projects reported overall positive changes in comparison to the initial situation, prior to the project being implemented. Although all projects indicate that it is not possible to attribute all positive outcomes to sport alone, each project shows, whether through formal assessment or anecdotal evidence, that the platform provided by sport allowed for the further development of project participants. More specifically, the platform sport allowed them to acquire and/or further develop social skills such as working together as a team and being part of a group; as well as key personal or individual competencies such as self-confidence, self-esteem and respect for others.

Central Role of the Coach and/or Facilitator

All projects highlighted the central role of the coaches and/or facilitators in relaying the positive aspects of the use of sport. Participants reported to have developed a relationship of trust with their coaches in several instances, indicating that the coach was not only seen as an authority but someone who could be approached with personal problems and challenges. In addition, coaches often mediated between children and parents in cases where issues such as participation in the project, performance at school or security concerns (that could have hindered participation in the project) arose.

Participatory Approach

SAD’s approach with each of the four projects introduced, includes a participatory approach to design, implementation and/or M&E. In the case of the Sri Lanka project especially, the inclusion of the local project partner, coaches as well as project participants into the project design and implementation, helped to (a) develop a sense of ownership towards the project and (b) allow project participants to think creatively about how to make the sports activities more inclusive (e.g. by adapting the activities to include weaker children, girls, children with disabilities, etc.).

Integrated M&E systems

The M&E systems used in all four projects were comprised of mixed-methods approaches of obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data. Furthermore, SAD’s experience shows that using creative techniques to obtain information about perceived changes in the situation since the introduction of the project in question, can provide further information about changes in behaviour and perceptions (intended or unintended) that have occurred. The experience of working with children and youth shows that creative techniques such as photo monitoring, using pictures, etc. allows participants to express their views of the project that they may otherwise have not been able to share.

Final thoughts

These overall trends drawn from the experience of SAD provide a flexible framework for further projects to be carried out in the area of Sport & Development. Without recommending a ‘one size fits all’ approach to Sport & Development projects, elements drawn from SAD’s experience indicate three key aspects that should be considered when designing future projects:

- The central role of the coach, facilitator or leader of sports activities must not be overlooked;
- Participation of the project implementers and beneficiaries in the design, implementation and assessment of the project is crucial;
- Use of an integrated M&E system allows for further outcomes (intended or unintended) to be revealed more easily.

All in all, taking these three aspects into consideration can provide a useful starting point for future projects in the area of Sport & Development.