Sport for development (SfD) refers to the use of sport policies, programmes and projects to achieve development and peace outcomes beyond the playing field. This approach has grown rapidly in the last 20 years, with a range of public, private and civil society initiatives using sport for good.

However the overall impact of the SfD sector remains unclear, partly due to a lack of robust research and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), limited long-term results, unclear theories of change, and few strategies to tackle broader structural problems (Coakley, 2011; Giulianotti 2011; Richards et al. 2013). As such it is often difficult to determine the value and viability of investments in SfD.

Given this challenge, the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation South Africa (Laureus SA) commissioned a systematic review of SfD evidence in South Africa. This review builds upon a global review of SfD evidence in six cities (including Cape Town) and a review of SfD in the United States.

What did we investigate?
The systematic review assessed the quality of SfD evidence in South Africa, seeking to identify critical factors that impact the efficacy of SfD interventions, and analyzing the potential to scale approaches.

What did we find?
The review found examples of good practice and clear opportunities for learning and advancing SfD in South Africa. The quality of methods and evidence in South Africa, however, was low - this echoes findings from the global review and is thus not unique to South Africa. More research is needed to assess the efficacy and critical factors impacting SfD interventions. Across studies and SfD programmes, interventions and contextual factors were inconsistently reported and studied making it difficult to compare different interventions. Opportunities exist to improve research and MEL to demonstrate and understand what works best.

How can we move forward?
The findings from the review informed the development of five overarching recommendations for organizations, researchers, funders, and policy makers:

1. Promote multi-sector collaboration to advance SfD in South Africa;
2. Develop better outcomes measures for youth-targeted SfD;
3. Position individual behaviour within a broader ecosystem;
4. Improve youth participation in SfD; and,
5. Coordinate efforts among researchers, practitioners and donors to improve the quality of methods in SfD research.
The Challenge
However, certain SFD programmes exhibit an ongoing gap between evidence and practice. As such, it is difficult to determine the efficacy and scalability of sport for good approaches and programs. This may cause investors and stakeholders to question the value and viability of such approaches.

The UN Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace 2018 – 2020 has recognised this challenge. Action Area 4 outlines a focus on improving sport-related data (UNGA, 2018).

The Solution
Robust research and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) are critical in order to ensure we can measure the contributions of sport-based approaches, allowing stakeholders to determine critical factors, identify key challenges and ultimately define ‘what works best in sport for development’.

The Kazan Action Plan on sport, physical education and physical activity (adopted at the Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Sport and Physical Education – MINEPS VI) states the need to ‘maximise the contributions of sport to sustainable development and peace’ (UNESCO, 2017). The South African government has committed to building an ‘active and winning nation’ through sport and recreation, including using sport for development and peace (SRSA, 2012). Further, South Africa has held the post of chair of CIGEPS (the intergovernmental committee on physical education and sport) and the sport for development and peace international working group (SDP IWG).

Many actors, including Laureus SA, seek to maximise, and measure, the contributions that sport-based approaches can make to national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The use of sport for development and peace has been recognised by the United Nations in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an ‘enabler’ of sustainable development (UNGA, 2015).
**Methods**

The systematic review included a comprehensive assessment of academic and grey literature related to SfD in South Africa, building upon the methodology and findings of the Global Review.

**Key research questions:**
1. What are the common characteristics of SfD programs which show impact?
2. In what thematic areas is SfD most effective? Does this differ across contexts?
3. Which critical factors impact the efficacy of SfD interventions in South Africa?
4. Is there potential to scale approaches or critical factors that contribute to successful SfD interventions in South Africa?
5. Who are critical stakeholders?
6. What are other contextual factors?

The review focused on SfD evidence related to the following five thematic areas:

1. Community development, social cohesion, and peace building;
2. Education;
3. Employment;
4. Mental health and wellbeing; and
5. Life on land.

**Quality of Evidence Process**

Almost 4,000 records were identified through a comprehensive academic search and grey literature review (including reaching out to identified experts, academics and SfD practitioners in South Africa).

Following screening, 11 articles were identified that met all inclusion criteria (in addition to the 15 articles previously identified in the Global Review for Cape Town). This included 5 articles identified through the grey literature search and 6 articles identified in the academic database search. Following critical appraisal, 5 articles from the academic literature search and 3 from the grey literature search were included for quantitative analyses (this included mixed methods studies); with 3 purely qualitative studies included – 1 from the academic search and 2 from the grey literature.

**Thematic Focus**

SfD interventions in South Africa disproportionately focus on achieving outcomes related to community development, social cohesion, and peace-building (44%) and mental health and wellbeing (25%) with less focus on employment and education, and none of the grey or academic literature included SfD interventions on life on land.

**Evidence base and critical factors**

Three quarters of included studies were determined to be low quality, mirroring results from the Global Review. Findings from the literature should be interpreted with caution and future research is still needed to help identify the critical factors impacting the efficacy and scalability of SfD interventions in South Africa.

**Critical Factors Identified in the Global Review:**

"Very few explanatory variables were identified in the reviewed sources, and even fewer with strong empirical support. However, across all six geographic locations we saw articles that did address explanatory variables focused on:

- Programme climate (e.g. safe space, welcoming environment, supportive adults and peers);
- Relationships (e.g. respect, trust, mentorship, accessibility, reciprocity);
- Programme design and implementation (e.g. rule modification);
- Programme leadership (e.g. coach sport proficiency, coach gender, coach competence, volunteer quality, volunteer retention);
- Participant access to opportunities (e.g. community service, development of employment-related skills, education, workshops)."

**Sources**

3,588: SfD academic articles
304: SfD grey documents
15: SfD articles met all inclusion criteria
11: SfD articles from Cape Town previously identified in global review
Implications and Recommendations

SfD in South Africa encompasses a diverse range of interventions, organisations and intended outcomes, and offers many promising contributions to positive youth development across most of the thematic areas assessed in this review.

However, the overall weak quality of methods and evidence makes it difficult to determine which thematic areas SfD approaches seem capable of making the most effective and impactful contributions to the future, and whether this differs across contexts.

Given the current state of affairs in South Africa, this report recommends opportunities to advance SfD through improved processes, partnerships and research.

1. Promote multi-sector collaboration to advance SfD in South Africa
   - Layered and more comprehensive approaches that take into account structural and contextual factors are needed as they are more likely to produce change.
   - Strategies and evidence-based interventions from other sectors such as positive youth development should be discussed and considered more thoughtfully in SfD.
   - Higher quality methods and evidence can be generated through partnerships between SfD organisations and academic institutions.

2. Develop better outcomes measures for youth-targeted SfD
   - Longer time scales are needed to assess the effectiveness of SfD interventions.
   - More objective outcomes should be considered and used where appropriate. Education attainment and performance, employment, and HIV status are examples of areas where outcomes can be objectively verified (as opposed to self-reported).

3. Position individual behaviour within a broader ecosystem
   - There is the need to integrate contextual factors in intervention and study design, understanding a socio-ecological model and different levels at which change occurs.
   - Organizations and funders should deepen their understanding of and measure individual factors that may influence intervention effectiveness.

4. Improve youth participation in SfD
   - Practitioners, donors, and researchers should consider participatory approaches that engage young people (at whom interventions are aimed) in identifying problems, conducting research and advocating for changes on research evidence.

5. Coordinate efforts among researchers, practitioners and donors to improve quality of methods in SfD research
   - Adopt an ethical approach to research and ensure the safeguarding of participants.
   - Consult with experts and advisors to input on the design of proposed SfD studies, including identifying

Additional Considerations and Factors from this review:

- **Self-efficacy:** Self-efficacy emerged as a key construct and outcome measure in the SfD literature. SfD interventions often positioned self-efficacy as a theoretical “bridge” between knowledge about an issue (e.g. HIV/AIDS) and behaviour change.

- **Outcome Importance and Validity:**
  - Nearly all measures of outcomes relied exclusively on self-reported data.

- **Youth Characteristics and Segments:**
  - SfD studies and interventions vary in their attention to individual characteristics such as sex, age, socio-economic or other demographic characteristics likely to influence the acceptability, appropriateness, and effectiveness of interventions.

- **HIV prevention and violence reduction**
  - HIV prevention, violence reduction and anti-social behavior were the primary outcomes of interest in the SfD literature in South Africa.

- **Digital Media:**
  - Only one intervention included and evaluated the use of mobile phone-based communication (SMS broadcasting) as part of its intervention with youth. Given estimates of nearly 100% mobile phone access and high levels of use among youth in South Africa, there seems to be a gap in SfD in considering how technology is influencing youth behavior, norms, and preferred styles of communication.

- **Partnerships with Research Institutions and Students:**
  - Students conducting research as part of formal academic studies provided much more detailed analyses of stakeholder and contextual factors potentially influencing intervention outcomes.
The End Game
Laureus SA and Laureus Global have now worked with independent researchers to systematically review the evidence of youth-focused SfD in six global cities (Global review) and at the country level in the United States and now, South Africa.

Ultimately this provides opportunities for improved and systematic evidence on what works (and what doesn’t) in the use of sport for development and peace, with strong alignment to international policies and commitments, while ensuring findings are contextually relevant to South Africa.

This provides the opportunity for Laureus, governments, aid agencies, local, regional and global actors to better determine the value and viability of investments in sport for development, ultimately enabling resources to be allocated to approaches and programs that show the greatest potential for impact, including to the SDGs and other identified development priorities. This requires investment, resources and strategic partnerships - partner with us to change the game.

About Laureus Sport for Good
The Laureus Sport for Good Foundation uses the power of sport to end violence, discrimination and disadvantage. We support SfD programmes which enhance the social and emotional development of children and young people in disadvantaged communities, reduce the impact of violence, conflict and discrimination in their lives, inspire healthy behaviour change and increase their educational achievements and employability skills. We strengthen the SfD sector through impact measurement, research and knowledge-sharing. We highlight serious social issues faced by children and young people and unlock greater resources for the sector through effective advocacy and communications.

About Laureus South Africa
The Laureus South Africa Sport for Good Foundation (Laureus SA) was founded in 2004.

Since inception, Laureus SA has provided funding and support to 30 funded and supported civil society organisations that use sport for good, with investments totalling over approximately R 9.3 million.

Laureus SA aims to become the leading SfD organisation in South Africa by 2020. A key strategic goal for Laureus SA is to improve the evidence base in the SfD sector in South Africa. This includes the need to improve MEL capacity among grantees, form strategic partnerships with academic institutions, and provide support for internal and external high quality research and evaluation.

The Review Team
The review team was diverse in terms of training, geography, research, field experience, and career status, with past experiences working together on various projects. The team was comprised of Dr Ben Sanders (PhD from University of the Western Cape), Chris Barkley and Dr Geoff Barkley (PhD from University of Virginia). The review team acknowledges the support provided by Laureus SA management, in particular Cyndi Mendoza, and the contributions made by various experts.

Staying True to our Sporting Vision
Laureus still believes that sport can change the world - as famously stated by Nelson Mandela - and this continues to drive our work locally and globally.

However, we recognise that increased and improved evidence is needed to determine the scale and scope of contributions that sport can make to development and peace, in order to support and further Mandela’s vision.

As such Laureus SA has invested in, and supported, efforts to measure the effectiveness of SfD approaches in contributing to non-sport development outcomes. This includes the systematic review described above, capacity building activities for grantees and development of partnerships with academic institutions.

This is relevant not just for Laureus programmes and grantees, but assists with the growth, strengthening, sustainability and professionalisation of the broader SfD and sport sectors.

appropriate methods, theoretical approaches and analysis.
- Identify standardized, validated, public domain evaluation instruments to measure outcomes in the outlined thematic areas (e.g. mental health and well-being scale).
- Implement comparative studies investigating SfD across interventions, adopting standardized measures to analyze cost effectiveness and return on investment.

DISCUSSION
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