

Chapter 4

Measuring Progress: Data, Monitoring and Accountability (SDG 17)

4.1 Introduction

The scale and scope of the 17 SDGs and the 167 related targets is ambitious. Identifying whether or not these targets have been met by 2030 is, in itself, an ambitious objective, but one that is strongly prioritised in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Extensive work has been undertaken by the United Nations' Statistical Commission and a specific Inter-agency and Expert Group to develop a Global Indicator Framework for reviewing progress towards the SDGs. The Global Indicator Framework proposed in March 2016 consists of a total of 230 indicators across all SDGs and related targets (UNESCO 2016).

The assessment of levels of achievement against the Global Indicator Framework will be undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. While this process will draw on comparative data collected at national level, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* also places significant emphasis on the importance of country-led review processes and the development of complementary indicators relevant to national priorities and levels of development.

This guide and chapter focuses on this at national level in considering how different sources of data can be drawn upon to determine the contribution of sport to the SDGs. Various stakeholders have previously sought to respond to well-recognised limitations of the evidence-base for sport-based approaches. However, this remains a significant undertaking given the malleable and diverse ways in which sport has been utilised to address a wide range of development outcomes. Disparities remain in the breadth of the evidence-base that can be identified globally, nationally and with respect to particular initiatives. Of particular relevance to this guide are limitations in the collation and use of evidence for sport that can inform

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national-level policy development and implementation (Nicholson *et al.* 2010; Keim and de Coning 2014).

In this regard, there is ongoing recognition that reviewing progress towards the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* will require ‘capacity-building support for developing countries, including the strengthening of national data systems and evaluation programmes’ (UNGA 2015). This requirement is specifically captured in SDG targets 17.18 and 17.19. In this chapter, analysis of existing data collection and measures of progress for sport-based approaches will be followed by examination of how policy-makers could approach the task of evidencing the contribution of sport to the SDGs.

4.2 Analysis of sport and specific SDG targets

Target 17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing states, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

Target 17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries.

The importance accorded to developing the evidence-base for sport-based approaches partly responds to concerns that inflated claims have been made for their impact (Coakley 2011). Such claims may fail to fully account for the magnitude of development challenges and the complexity of identifying the contribution of particular sport-based initiatives (Coalter 2010). However, recognition of the scope and limitations of evidence for sport-based approaches has been significantly enhanced through different reviews, including those that have been commissioned by organisations, such as the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, and others that have been undertaken independently (SDPIWG 2008; Cronin 2011; Schulenkorf *et al.* 2016). Commonly, such reviews have reached nuanced and carefully qualified conclusions regarding the potential of sport to contribute to development outcomes.

Significant efforts and resources have also been assigned to capacity-building to improve evidence generation with respect to sport-based approaches (Levermore 2011). Guidelines and toolkits which have been designed to support the monitoring and evaluation of sport-based approaches reflect the prioritisation, to date, of evidencing the impact of specific initiatives (see, for example, Burnett and Uys 2000; Coalter 2006; sportcoachUK 2011). Concerns have been raised that this prioritisation may be representative of accountability systems that are primarily oriented towards external donors (Kay 2012). Especially with there being recognised limitations as regards the scale and quality of evidence for sport-based approaches in developing countries (Lindsey *et al.* 2016), further effort is required to ensure that context-relevant knowledge effectively informs policies and practices for sport and development.

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Levels of data availability vary from country to country, and many do not have well-established or rigorously implemented national systems of data collection specific to sport (Nicholson *et al.* 2010; Keim and de Coning 2014). More generalised data from official national statistics are unlikely, in isolation, to provide sufficient understanding of the way that sport-based approaches may contribute to particular SDG targets and indicators. Nevertheless, a range of evidence sources may be available to national policy-makers in order to make reasoned judgements on the contribution of sport towards the SDGs (see Figure 4.1). There are several levels of evidence that may be considered to help make such judgements, including:

- **national and international level data** – such as official statistics on the economy, health, education and the labour market, some of which may have particular indicators relevant to sport
- **regional- and local-level data** – such as disaggregated census data and official statistics, and data generated to monitor public-sector initiatives driven by local policy
- **evidence drawn from monitoring and evaluation of discrete initiatives** – such as the monitoring and evaluation of international, national or locally based sport-based initiatives, undertaken by civil society or private sector organisations



Figure 4.1 Measuring progress

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Commission

- **evidence from academic research** – findings which may have been collected in discrete spatial locations, or specific disciplinary or thematic foci and can therefore provide evidence upon which, for example, policy decisions for the scaling-up of sport-based approaches can be reasonably made.

In considering the use of such evidence, recognition must be given to how sport-based approaches may make direct or indirect contributions in relation to particular SDGs, targets and indicators. A direct contribution may be defined and identified where a sport-based approach has an identifiable impact, independent of other factors, by, for example, making a discrete economic contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) through sport tourism, or by making a direct contribution to the achievement of equal opportunities for women through specific employment practices. An indirect contribution may be achieved alongside other activities beyond the realm of sport. In such circumstances, determining that sport has made a tangible contribution may require the collation of contributory evidence towards a stated goal. Examples may include the use of evidence on the contribution of sport-based activities to specific aspects of public health education. Table 4.1 (overleaf) provides examples of how sport-based approaches may contribute directly or

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Table 4.1 Examples of direct or indirect contributions towards SDGs, specific targets and indicators

SDGs and exemplar targets	UN agreed indicators	Potential/indicative evidence for direct and indirect contribution of sport towards targets and indicators
SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages		
Target 3.4 By 2030, reduce by one-third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and well-being	3.4.1 Mortality of cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease	<p><i>Direct:</i> National or local data identifying the contribution of sport participation to increased physical activity among particular population groups, correlated with WHO physical activity guidelines</p> <p><i>Indirect:</i> Evaluation that indicates the contribution of sport-based education to increased awareness of health and physical inactivity issues</p>

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Table 4.1 Examples of direct or indirect contributions towards SDGs, specific targets and indicators (cont.)

SDGs and exemplar targets	UN agreed indicators	Potential/indicative evidence for direct and indirect contribution of sport towards targets and indicators
SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all		
Target 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations	4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected as data become available) for all [SDG 4] indicators that can be disaggregated	<p><i>Direct:</i> Evaluation of targeted sport-based approaches that indicate their impact on enabling females (or otherwise vulnerable persons) to engage in education or other forms of vocational training</p> <p><i>Indirect:</i> National or local data of participation in physical education and sport in educational settings that are disaggregated by gender and other parity indices</p>
SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls		
Target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex	<p><i>Direct:</i> National data that disaggregate participation in sport by sex to monitor progress towards ending inequality and discrimination</p> <p><i>Indirect:</i> Academic research that may indicate the cultural and material effects of the institution of policy and legal frameworks on discrimination in sport</p>
SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all		
Target 8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7% GDP growth per annum in the least developed countries	8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	<p><i>Direct:</i> National and local data that disaggregate the contribution of sport-based activity to GDP</p> <p><i>Indirect:</i> Academic research that can be used to estimate the economic impact of particular strategies to lever economic impact via, for example, sport-related tourism</p>

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Table 4.1 Examples of direct or indirect contributions towards SDGs, specific targets and indicators (cont.)

SDGs and exemplar targets	UN agreed indicators	Potential/indicative evidence for direct and indirect contribution of sport towards targets and indicators
SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable		
Target 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities	11.7.1 The average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, disaggregated by age group, sex and persons with disabilities	<p><i>Direct:</i> Monitoring/evaluation data for specific or multiple facilities that indicate usage by age group, sex and persons with disabilities, disaggregated by locality</p> <p><i>Indirect:</i> Local planning data on urban space available for sport and active recreation use</p>
SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels		
Target 16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms	16.5.1 Percentage of persons who had at least one contact with a public official, who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by these public officials, in the previous 12 months, disaggregated by age group, sex, region and population group	<p><i>Direct:</i> National monitoring data on cases of corruption identified in sport</p> <p><i>Indirect:</i> Monitoring/evaluation on indicators of good governance within sporting federations and other bodies</p>

indirectly towards SDG targets and specific indicators. These are presented here for illustrative purposes, and further analysis is provided throughout the remainder of this guide.

The preceding analysis indicates the constraints and possibilities in respect of the availability of data and evidence on sport-based approaches. The next section identifies how available data may be used and analysed to assess the contribution of sport-based approaches to sustainable development.

4.3 Methods for measuring and assessing the impact of sport-based approaches

Claims regarding the direct or indirect contribution of sport-based approaches to SDG targets need to give due care and attention to the way that definitions of value are constructed and how sources of data are interpreted to indicate positive contributions. Whether considering individual SDG indicators that are specified in different ways or seeking to measure and assess particular sport-based approaches, a number of terms can be used to distinguish between different sources of ‘value’:

- *The value of outputs* – this is usually a measure of the value of the productivity of the intervention. Often it is possible to enumerate this value, i.e. the number of people who participated in a sport-based initiative, or who engaged in specific education activities, or who fulfilled particular leadership roles. Such measures indicate the level of *productivity* of a project, but do not necessarily indicate its *social, economic or environmental value*.
- *The value of outcomes* – outcomes can be defined as changes in people’s lives, the economy or the environment that have been achieved as a direct result of an activity associated with particular institutional policies, interventions or initiatives.
- *The value of impact* – impact can be defined as the identification of a tangible effect that wholly or partly meets wider strategic goals. This is more difficult to measure because initiatives and interventions generally occur in the context of many other indirect influences.

There are several examples of evaluation frameworks which refer to outputs, outcomes and impact (see, for example, Barker and Watson 2010; Rickey and Olgain 2011; Parsons *et al.* 2013).

With the exception of a limited number of areas of experimental sport science research (in fields such as physiology), it is generally not possible to isolate contributory factors with sufficient dexterity to provide ‘proof’ of the direct impact of sport-based approaches. Making effective judgements, at national level, on the contribution of a range of government-led, partnership, complementary or autonomous sport-based

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approaches may therefore require ‘triangulation’ of different sources of evidence (Murray 2016). Different types of approaches to triangulation can be adopted, with potentially varying implications and uses for policy-making. Furthermore, as indicated by the following three exemplar types of approaches, each may utilise and require different forms of existing data and evidence (Denzin 2002; Greene 2007; Howe 2010; Fielding 2012):

- *Triangulation of findings from complementary studies using a range of methodologies* – where findings are drawn from a mix of quantitative studies (produced by experimental methods, survey methods and demographic data analysis) and qualitative studies (using methods such as interviews and observation) to make evidence-based judgements on likely associations between features of specific interventions and their consequences.
- *Triangulation of evidence from studies using the same or similar methods of data collection* – such an approach allows for comparative assessments (by, for example, specific geographical areas, population characteristics or points in time) and meta-analytical review techniques, particularly in the field of health research, to assess results from a broad range of studies in order to determine generalised findings regarding the effects of interventions or initiatives.
- *Theory-driven triangulation* – the purpose of such an approach is to compare the conclusions drawn from research which has been undertaken from different positions of theoretical interest or political/conceptual standpoints. Such approaches can be used to undertake ‘gap analyses’ of specific areas of exploration that may have been previously overlooked or that are of specific interest for policy and practice.

The process of data triangulation, as indicated above, may involve drawing upon a range of theoretical ideas, official statistics and empirical evidence to make credible judgements on the direct or indirect effect of sport-based activity towards a particular social, economic or environmental objective. Sources of evidence may range from those collected through conventional approaches to scientific enquiry (Hilgartner *et al.*

2008; Jasanoff 2004), to studies which claim to determine the social return on investment in sports-based activity (Cabinet Office 2009; Fujiwara *et al.* 2014; Davies *et al.* 2016). Ideally, such work would be undertaken from the outset of a policy intervention or initiative by adopting mixed-method approaches to enquiry; however, it may alternatively be undertaken by retrospective reappraisal of many sources of evidence.

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Approaches to evaluation and triangulation are generally underpinned by principles which require the identification of actual or potential patterns that indicate the contributions of policy interventions or initiatives to positive change. Such analysis requires that the relative importance of a range of variables or factors are ordered collectively and/or sequentially to measure desired economic, social or environmental impacts. Policy-makers' growing interest in the identification of tangible evidence for the contribution of specific interventions to positive change has led to the development of pragmatic methodological approaches to show the extent of impact and the patterns of influences that contribute to it. For example, the current popularity of 'theory of change' models can be appealing to policy-makers because of their strong focus on the 'end point' of interventions in impact terms; for such models, evidence is garnered to show what additional benefit has been 'produced' from investment in interventions and initiatives to achieve social, economic and/or environmental change.

Using this approach, analysts begin by assembling a range of factors in causal chains which demonstrate how an intervention may contribute to or detract from the achievement of a desired outcome. Such factors may include, for example, the biographical characteristics of participants (for example, age, sex, ethnicity, race, disability, educational achievement and socio-economic status) so that it is possible to examine the extent to which an initiative produces the desired outputs, outcomes and impact for specific groups. Further specific evaluations of sport-based approaches have, for example, sought empirical evidence of identifiable and positive contributions to behavioural change which, in turn, may contribute towards particular public health outcomes (Coalter 2013). In other analyses, the presumed benefit of an intervention may be 'monetised'. Cost-benefit or social return on investment analysis has, for example, attempted to show how much money governments may subsequently save, or how much social value

is produced, by investing in preventive measures. Increasing numbers of examples are available of such approaches being applied to sport. There has been a number of attempts to claim significant long-term benefit from sport initiatives through cost-benefit analysis and social return on investment (SROI) (see, for example, Crabbe 2013; ICF/GHK 2013; Davies *et al.* 2016).

The use of the available methodological approaches to explain relationships between contributory factors can be controversial if claims about the attribution of benefit from interventions are difficult to directly discern or appear to be exaggerated in some way. The risk of over-claiming the impact of interventions can be increased when impact indicators are based on predictions of what 'might' have happened if the intervention had not taken place. For example, in respect of sport-based initiatives that aim to help young people who are assessed as being 'at risk' of criminality, spurious associations may be made about the statistical likelihood of individuals committing a criminal act had they not taken part; furthermore, such approaches to analysis can reinforce negative stereotypes and encourage the assimilation of deficit models of certain categories of young people (Darnell 2012; Chapman, *et al.* 2015). Controversies can also emerge when approaches to defining positive impact are underpinned by funding imperatives which may meet the interests of one constituency of beneficiaries, but do so at the expense of others (see, for example, Nutley and Davies 2002; Packwood 2002; Tenbensen 2004; Laforest and Orsini 2005). For example, attempts to justify specific sport-based contributions to public health could result in attention and resources being detracted from other forms of physical activity that may have the potential to engage sections of the population for whom sport is unattractive. This example reinforces the potential benefit of seeking more collective approaches not only to implementation, but also to evaluation and reviewing progress.

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4.4 Concluding implications for policy-makers

Reliable and evidence-based judgements on progress towards the SDGs are vital to inform policy at global, national and sub-national levels but, as this chapter has shown, the production of reliable indicators of impact can be hard to come by and evidence of social, economic or environmental impact can be subject to a range of interpretations. Furthermore, the importance given in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* to reviewing

Sport for Development Shared Measurement Framework

United Kingdom

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The physical health benefits of sport are widely understood, but can sport really reduce anti-social behaviour or raise employment levels? Does it have the power to influence people's social and emotional capacities or improve community relations?

That is the challenge facing many organisations, which, through the intentional use of sport or physical activity, are working to improve the lives of individuals, communities or society as a whole. Those working in this area know they are making a difference, and fully believe in the power of sport as a viable, cost-effective solution – when it's done well.

Although different organisations have different priorities, there is value in sport-for-development stakeholders using a common language when talking about outcomes and a common approach to measurement. If these stakeholders want to strengthen practice, they need to be able to engage in meaningful and useful conversations about 'what works' to improve programme design and delivery.

This was the driving force behind the creation of a Shared Measurement Framework, developed by the United Kingdom's Sport for Development Coalition and informed by consultation with sport for development organisations, academics and industry experts in the country. Critically, the Sport for Development Coalition worked closely with the United Kingdom Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and the National Sport Council (Sport England) to align our Framework with the government strategy 'Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation', released in December 2015.

A joined-up approach to measuring progress sends a strong message to stakeholders in other policy areas that the use of sport as a tool to improve the lives of individuals and communities should be taken seriously.

Sport for development outcomes can be either intrinsic or extrinsic. For example, a programme can support young people to increase their self-esteem and manage their emotions, and also to develop extrinsic behaviours, such as being active and healthy, learning and having a job. Outcomes can change individual emotional skills and behaviours and as a result influence family lives, communities and wider society.

To capture the range of outcomes that sport for development programmes deliver, we mapped these two continuums against each other to create a Sport for Development Outcomes Model.

The model identifies four distinct groups of outcomes:

1. social, emotional and cognitive capabilities
2. individual achievements and behaviours
3. interpersonal relationships
4. benefits to society.

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Sport for Development Shared Measurement Framework (cont.)

The model suggests that there are potential links between all four groups of outcomes. These are not direct casual links between each outcome group: they are based on the limited evidence available and represent the Sport for Development Coalition's hypothesis that sport for development can cause positive changes in a wide range of outcomes.

Ultimately, the Shared Measurement Framework is designed to empower providers and funders, encouraging them to take responsibility for better understanding their work and providing evidence on how they are contributing. It also directly responds to SDG targets 17.18 and 17.19 that call for an increase in 'quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data...to enable a more robust measurement of progress on sustainable development'.

The Sport for Development Coalition is continuing to consult, test and improve the current Framework. Sported in particular is focused on how we can make the Framework accessible, useable and useful for grassroots sport for development organisations in the United Kingdom, who are making a difference to young people and communities but often find it tough to prove it.

progress based on country priorities, processes and indicators has particular implications for sport. Assessing the contribution of sport to sustainable development needs to be initially framed by questions about what may be achievable given, for example, the current status of development in respect of particular SDGs, and also the scale of available investment. Consideration must also be given to whether, and which particular, contributions of sport may be plausibly identifiable through the collection, analysis and collation of appropriate evidence.

Diverse sport-based approaches associated with government-led, structured partnerships, complementary and autonomous implementation and involving various organisations may directly or indirectly contribute to, and provide evidence of, positive change. In addition, contributions to positive change do not often come solely from sport but arise in association and alongside those made in other sectors, such as education, health and economic development. Furthermore, progress towards SDGs may not always be a linear process, so care and realism must be applied to any judgements regarding the specific contribution of sport-based approaches and policies. Countries' progress towards the achievement of SDG targets may, for example, be affected by a range of factors, including significant global economic shifts, environmental factors, significant social upheaval or conflict, which may be largely beyond the control of governments or other stakeholders.

Care and realism must be applied to any judgements regarding the specific contribution of sport-based approaches and policies.

There remains a need for significant capacity-building and further dedicated investment if effective approaches to measuring and reviewing progress are to be widely adopted and utilised in different country contexts.

Nevertheless, judgements about the contribution of sport-based approaches can still usefully be made by drawing upon a range of sources of data and evidence where available. Specific methodologies which are adopted to evaluate discrete areas of policy and practice, together with attempts to triangulate a wider range of sources of evidence, can help support policy-makers in the process of making balanced and reasonable assessments of progress. Choices regarding particular approaches and methodologies may depend on a number of factors, and the scale and type of existing data and evidence may also enable or preclude particular approaches. To enable more rigorous processes of triangulation, sport and development organisations and other researchers should be encouraged to make their data and findings widely available. Furthermore, the extent to which different methodological approaches encompass analysis of contextual influences varies. Consideration of the particularities of local contexts and of national development priorities has been recommended as a priority for evaluation and research design, particularly where undertaken by international sport and development organisations or researchers (Kay 2012). Finally, while several methodologies for evaluation and triangulation have become available and are increasingly being used by sport and development organisations (Harris and Adams 2015), the distribution of resources to undertake such work is uneven in respect of different countries and in different areas of provision. Therefore, there remains a need for significant capacity-building and further dedicated investment if effective approaches to measuring and reviewing progress are to be widely adopted and utilised in different country contexts.

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