

Chapter 5

Introduction to Sport and Sustainable Development

The chapters in Section Two consider each of the six SDGs that have been identified, through extensive consultation with Commonwealth stakeholders (Commonwealth Secretariat 2016), as those that sport may be well placed to make effective and cost-efficient contributions to. Each chapter follows the same structure: firstly, an overview of the particular SDG and pertinent considerations with regard to it is provided; then an evidenced analysis of how the contribution of sport to particular SDG targets may be enhanced is presented; and finally, based on the frameworks and approaches identified in Section One of this guide, potential policy options to enhance implementation that can strengthen the contribution of sport-based approaches towards the goal are offered.

Common considerations regarding sport-based approaches underpin and link all six chapters. These considerations are founded upon the understanding that sport-based approaches may influence and be influenced by social, economic and environmental elements of sustainable development at different levels, from the individual to the structural level. Across these levels, a summary of different elements relevant to sport-based approaches is shown in Table 5.1.

The following six chapters relate to elements ranging from the individual to the structural levels, as identified in Table 5.1, in different measure. However, it is important to emphasise that the influence of, and impact on, different elements does not occur in isolation from other elements. Just as the SDGs are presented as ‘integrated and indivisible’, varied potential contributions of sport in respect of different goals and targets can be, and may need to be, mutually reinforcing. For example, enhancing the ‘situational’ provision of spaces and facilities (SDG 11) can be a vital factor in improving ‘individual’ health and well-being through participation in sport and active recreation (SDG 3).

Identifying these different levels and elements also draws attention to the varying scale and depth of the potential contributions of

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Table 5.1 Elements relevant to sport-based approaches and sustainable development

Individual elements	Relational elements	Situational elements	Structural elements
Material well-being	Family and intimate relationships	Local political, economic and environmental factors	Social, cultural, and political and economic conditions
Individual attributes (intelligence, health and well-being)	Peer and friendship networks	Local demography, culture and community safety, cohesion	Institutional structures (e.g. educational, legal, criminal justice systems)
Skills and aptitudes (credentials, talents, attractiveness, etc.)	Community and neighbourhood relationships	Local service provision, infrastructure and facilities	Economic and labour market conditions
Personality and temperament	Relationships in education and employment contexts		

Source: Adapted from Chapman *et al.* (2015)

sport-based approaches to particular SDGs. In the case of sport-based approaches which aim at improvements at the individual level, for example, depth refers to changes in people's lives which can be, for example, transformative and sustainably beneficial. Other sport-based approaches may seek to produce less radical change at the individual level, but produce change at a greater scale by, for example, producing positive outcomes for a more inclusive range of individuals. For example, structural changes to improve governance within sport organisations (SDG 16) may not have immediate impacts that are distinguishable at the individual level, but such changes are nevertheless important for underpinning the wider contribution of sport-based approaches across different forms of sustainable development.

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Not only may different sport-based approaches seek to make contributions of varying scale and depth but, equally, these contributions will vary between individuals and different contexts. 'Starting points' towards the SDGs substantially differ between individuals in the same context, in respect of structural conditions in different countries, and also in terms of levels and elements in between these two ends of the spectrum. Consequently, it is important to recognise that policy developments that contribute to 'small steps' forward – for individuals, communities or countries that are disadvantaged or marginalised – can represent 'giant leaps' in material and cultural terms.

The analysis in the following six chapters recognises, where appropriate and feasible, the influence of context, and also the potential scale and depth of potential sport-based contributions to particular SDGs. Nevertheless, those utilising this guide are recommended to further appraise contextual conditions when deciding on policy priorities and implementation. Sport-based approaches have greatest potential when their use is differentiated according to in-depth analysis of individual, relational, situational and structural conditions (Kay and Dudfield 2013).

Such differentiation remains relevant in respect of the policy options presented in the final section of each chapter in Section Two. Policy options are identified in respect of the SDG 17 targets for country-leadership and policy coherence, mobilising financial and human resources, and country-specific and disaggregated ‘measures of progress’. It is also recognised that the various policy options presented require different forms of government-led, structured partnership, complementary and autonomous implementation. Structuring policy options in this way allows for their implementation to be differentiated, but, again, policy-makers must still consider the specific application of proposed policy options within particular contexts.

Sport-based approaches have greatest potential when their use is differentiated according to in-depth analysis of individual, relational, situational and structural conditions.

References

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