



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

Realizing the social benefits of recreation

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1. What the research says



COMMONWEALTH ADVISORY BODY ON SPORT
REPORT JANUARY 2006



LITERATURE REVIEWS ON SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Commissioned by Sport for Development and Peace
International Working Group (SDP IWG) Secretariat
Toronto, Canada
October 18, 2007



Recreation *may* contribute to

- Social inclusion in schools, community and post-conflict societies
- Reduced youth crime through diversionary rehabilitation and gateway programs
- School retention, academic achievement and school safety
- Character- building, including ethical behaviour, empathy, and leadership ,especially among girls and women
- May reach young people who are not attracted by other opportunities, especially those hard to reach

Yet most important finding: context is key

- The evident benefits appear to be an indirect outcome of the context and social interaction that is possible in (recreation) rather than a direct outcome of participating in (recreation).
- To fully utilize the development potential of (recreation), it needs to be integrated in the existing development efforts.
 - Kidd & Donnelly (2007)

Recreation itself is not a sufficient condition

- ▶ Participants must feel it's 'their program', and have genuine access, including equipment and transportation.
- ▶ Participants must feel safe, valued, socially connected, morally and economically supported, personally and politically empowered; and hopeful about the future, i.e. there needs to be a supportive social context.
- ▶ Skilled, ethical, enthusiastic leaders are key.

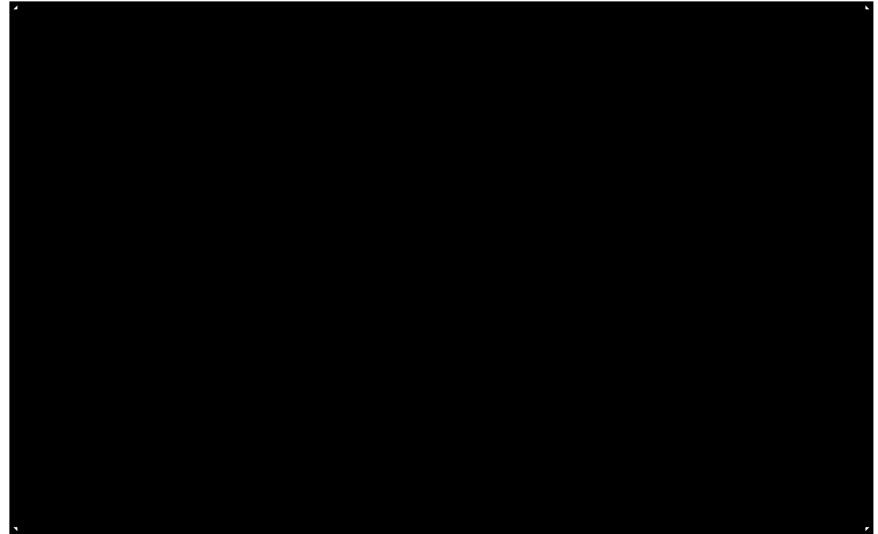
To be successful, programs must

- ▶ Be intentionally planned to realize specific developmental goals, i.e. have an evidence-based, developmentally focused logic model, with appropriate measurement for monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
- ▶ Involve intended beneficiaries and their communities in the planning process and take local needs and assets into consideration.
- ▶ Be part of a multi-agency approach, i.e. integrally linked to education, employment, mental health and other relevant initiatives
- ▶ Be sustained to have a lasting impact.

In short

- ▶ Programs must be relevant and accessible, and participants must feel safe and protected
- ▶ Social outcomes must be intentionally planned, and conducted with competent, ethical leadership.
- ▶ Programs must be linked to other interventions such as education, health and employment, so it becomes 'recreation plus' or 'teamed up recreation'
- ▶ Teamed up recreation must be sustained.
- ▶ There must be ongoing M&E, with the participants involved.

2. Linking better recreation to Toronto 2015



The challenges

- ▶ While major games inspire, unless there are accessible, relevant, safe and well- led opportunities available to those so inspired, little if any new participation ever occurs
- ▶ Record of previous games discouraging
 - Despite remarkable performances of Canadian athletes at Montreal, Calgary and Vancouver, no ‘Olympic bounce’ in participation
 - Australian participation among children and youth has actually declined since Sydney 2000

Two recent exceptions

- ▶ London 2012 created International Inspiration to provide new opportunities for 12 million children and youth in 20 countries
- ▶ Glasgow 2014 will ensure that every Scottish child can swim, and citizens of all ages and abilities have new opportunities



Yet sadly

- ▶ Neither Toronto 2015 (preoccupied with building facilities and preparing for staging the Games), nor the Ontario Government nor any of the participating municipalities has a legacy plan for sport and physical activity
- ▶ No long-term PRF plan for the sustainable intentional pursuit of social outcomes through recreation

Still time

- ▶ Favourable convergences:
 - New Canadian Sport Policy
 - Growing public concern
 - 2017 provides a post- Games benchmark
 - Toronto has a long history of leadership in public recreation

Recommendations

- ▶ 1. Create a recreation legacy plan for Toronto 2015, tied into the Pan Am facilities (especially the Pan Am Aquatic Centre at UTSC), that will deliver significant sustainable benefits to Torontonians living around those facilities.
- ▶ 2. Create a long-term PFR recreation strategy, based upon the above principles, that will deliver significant sustainable social benefits to all Torontonians, especially those living in disadvantaged neighborhoods.