ASEAN Sport and SDGs Youth Funshop:
A Workshop on Promoting Youth-led, Sport-based Projects for Positive Social Transformations

The Philippine Institute of Sports Complex, Manila, Philippines
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1. Background: the issue

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, sets out a “supremely ambitious and transformational vision” for global development. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their associated targets are comprehensive and far-reaching in scope and “balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental”.

Sport plays an important role in the achievement of 2030 Agenda as an enabler of sustainable development. The document explicitly acknowledges “the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives.” The statement represents an important milestone for sport and an opportunity to build on previous commitments and progress made by the international community, including the United Nations system and its partners at the international and national levels.

Youth-led initiatives using sport to promote peace and development are numerous and predate 2030 Agenda. The international standard-setting in the area of sport for peace and development has been complemented in individual countries by a wide range of grass-roots activities “operationalizing” sport-based approaches to development. These initiatives hold a great promise for informing and shaping policy development that can upscale best practices onto a national or regional levels. At the same time, they require a detailed understanding of the existing landscape of sport-based approaches to development and appreciation of the ongoing fluidity that characterises a rapidly developing sector.

Grass-roots initiatives that run on the enthusiasm and energy of local youth activists, often from marginalized and vulnerable communities, are particularly important for the promotion of sport-based approaches to development. The policy-makers would greatly benefit from having the knowledge of the range and diversity of civil society organisations that now exist across and within particular countries. Often such initiatives have deep and lasting positive impact on communities, despite (or perhaps because of) being propelled by NGOs with very limited financial resources and relying on the work of volunteers.

The diversity of sport-based initiatives is matched by significant variation in their established and emerging approaches to sport and development provision. Some organisations and approaches are specifically oriented towards specific issues (e.g. gender equality of HIV/AIDS), while others use more holistic and flexible approaches to contribute to efforts to address a range of development outcomes. Many initiatives target young people who may be considered particularly vulnerable due to various socio-economic or political factors. The feasibility and also desirability of scaling-up these experiences is therefore an important consideration for policy-makers.

In South-East Asia, SDP is a relatively ‘new’ concept which holds great potential given the burgeoning youth population and the pressing need to identify innovative solutions for them in terms of access to accessibility and availability of basic rights and facilities. However, there is a scarcity of systematic
analysis of the successful grass-roots initiatives – their potential to be disseminated across a country, to be integrated into national policies, and to be promoted as best practices internationally. Particularly interesting are the elements of sports for peace and development initiatives in the region that “make them work”, often under severe resource constraints, and the analysis of the potential of these elements to be replicated in other localities with different socio-cultural and economic conditions.

2. Response: ASEAN Sports and SDGs Youth Funshop:

UNESCO, in collaboration with the Philippines Sports Commission, is holding a “funshop” (a workshop designed to emphasize positive thoughts and interactions inherent to sport) in Manila, on 8-10 November 2017. The event will bring two outstanding young people from each of the 10 ASEAN countries and Timor-Leste who are leaders within their community and have a proven history of engaging diverse segments of society through various sports-based social enterprises and initiatives.

3. The Overall Aim of the workshop

Hosted by the Philippines Sport Commission (PSC), this workshop, referred to as “funshop” to emphasize its focus on youth, will support the global efforts to maximize the use of sport for sustainable development by:

1. enabling the youth to showcase best practices in using sport for positive social transformation;
2. providing the knowledge and experience accumulated from such initiatives to policy-makers for a wider dissemination and greater impact; and
3. launching an active ASEAN Sport for SDGs Youth Network for sustained exchanges, capacity-building and advocacy.

4. The Specific Objectives of the Workshop

- To give the youth a clear voice and the opportunity to:
  1. share experiences about methodologies that are effective in mobilizing the youth around positive values;
  2. identify the key elements of their projects that are scalable to the national, or international level; and
  3. express their specific needs in their continued efforts to promote sports for development and peace (i.e. improved access to basic rights and facilities, development of soft skills towards youth employability etc.)

- To explore linkages between the featured best practices on sports for peace and development and 2030 Agenda, the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and the corresponding targets.

- To promote practical application of the principles enshrined in the Kazan Action Plan and its corresponding Follow-up Framework.

- To enhance cooperation between public authorities, the sport movement and civil society, and to help create a regional community of practice in ASEAN.

5. Key outputs of the workshop

- Analytical Report on Good Practices from ASEAN in using grass-roots, youth-focused, sports-based initiatives towards the fulfilment of 2030 Agenda; the Report will offer actionable recommendations for the sports authorities on using sport for promoting peace and development at the local and national levels.

- Launching the ASEAN Sport for SDGs Youth Network.