

# Sport as an analogy to teach life skills and redefine moral values: A case study of the 'Seedbeds of Peace' sport-for-development programme in Medellin, Colombia

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## ABSTRACT

A history of drug trafficking in Medellin, Colombia, resulted in the city receiving the dubious distinction of being the murder capital of the world in 1991. Over a quarter of a century later, drug trafficking has left a complex legacy of an illegal and violent culture, which has subsequently eroded values systems that leave disadvantaged children vulnerable to criminal activities. To begin addressing this social problem, the Concreto Foundation has leveraged Colombia's passion for football in its sport-for-development (SFD) 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme. A case study design was used to illustrate how the 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme uses football as an analogy to teach life skills and redefine moral values. This case study adds to the limited theoretical understanding of how sport works in social change and further equips SFD practitioners with a sport mechanism not previously discussed in the literature.

## BACKGROUND

In 1991 the city of Medellin, Colombia, had the dubious distinction of being the murder capital of the world with a total of 6,349 murders, which equated to a murder rate of 380 per 100,000 people.<sup>1-2</sup> This was the peak of Medellin's darkest days as the drug trafficking activities of Pablo Escobar and his Medellin Cartel brought violence, terror and corruption to the city. Although a quarter of a century has now passed, the drug traffickers have left a complex legacy of an illegal and violent culture and eroded values systems that leave disadvantaged children vulnerable to

criminal activities, which is happening from an increasingly early age.<sup>3-4</sup> This social problem is being addressed by the Concreto Foundation's 'Seedbeds of Peace' Programme. The purpose of this case study is to understand the sport mechanisms used to strengthen moral values and teach life skills to programme participants.

## SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the popularity of sport as a vehicle for social change,<sup>5</sup> there is limited scientific evidence regarding its effectiveness<sup>6-7</sup>, and a limited understanding of how sport can impart social change.<sup>6,8-11</sup> Previously, sport for development (SFD) has been encumbered by "overly romanticised, communitarian generalisations about the 'power' of sport for development"<sup>11</sup> (p. 1386) and dependence "on the supposed inherent properties of sport to achieve desired outcomes".<sup>11</sup> (p. 609) However, sport can also have negative effects.<sup>12</sup> This realisation has at least required conditions to be attached to sport before assuming its positive effect.

## Conditions

According to Sugden<sup>13</sup> football, when well designed, is able to contribute to building bridges between otherwise divided communities. More specifically, Bruening et al.<sup>14</sup> argued that SFD programmes should be intentionally designed in order to achieve social change. In a sport-based service learning intervention, they found that intentional design elements such as continuous programming at the

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same sites each semester, students signing up for weekly shifts and van rides with peers between campus and their community contributed to the development of social capital. However, given that these intentional design elements are broader programme processes rather than the sport component of the intervention, clearly such a finding is not specific to SFD.

Similarly, Lyras and Welty Peachey<sup>6</sup> proposed a sport-for-development theory (SFDT) advocating that sport practices should be based on moral principles, mixed teams, traditional and non-traditional sports, and a variety of sport and physical activities to attract and sustain a more representative population. In addition, the authors noted that sport should be educational and that coaches and instructors should serve as positive role models and agents of change. These suggestions provide an undergirding theoretical framework of how sport can work for social change and be challenged when we substitute the word sport for art. Given the equal applicability of Lyras and Welty Peachey's principles to art, it is suggested that rather than representing a SFD theory, these are simply generic principles for vehicles of change in social interventions whether that vehicle be sport, art, cooking, or embroidery.

As such, the claim of Lyras and Welty Peachey<sup>6</sup> (p. 324) that "SFDT provides the essential features and structure to scientifically explain, describe, and predict how sport can effect social change" is incorrect. They are proposing a set of conditions that sport or any vehicle of change should aspire to, thus not adding to the understanding of how sport can work for social change. Bringing the focus back to sport, Coalter<sup>11</sup> distinguished between necessary and sufficient conditions for social change. According to Coalter,<sup>11</sup> participation in sport is only a necessary but not sufficient condition for social change within the context of SFD programmes. For example, sports may serve as sites for socialisation rather than causes of socialisation outcomes.<sup>15</sup> As such, in order for the possibility of social change to occur, there is a need to consider sufficient conditions beyond the necessary condition of sport.<sup>11</sup> For example, Lyras and Welty Peachey<sup>6</sup> suggested that for social change to occur, sport should be blended with cultural enrichment activities and global citizenship education.

To summarise, the causal relationship of SFD is not as positive and linear as originally assumed because the proposed sport-only conditions are not necessary for social change to occur. Even when positive conditions are attached to sport, it is viewed as a necessary rather than sufficient condition, and whereby change can only occur if

sport is supported by a broader system of social change.<sup>11</sup> However, because much of the conditions proposed can be equally applicable to other vehicles of change, there has been limited progress in understanding how sport itself can work for social change. The research that has best contributed to such understanding is that which has focused on the mechanisms of sport within social interventions.

## Mechanisms

There is a risk that by dismissing the romanticised generalisations about the 'power' of sport with supposed inherent properties to achieve social change,<sup>7,11</sup> the role of sport in development will also be dismissed. To avoid this, there is a need to refocus our thinking about SFD programmes by identifying the mechanisms by which sport, as part of a broader intervention, is contributing to social change. To overcome the "simple one-dimensional notion of the 'power of sport'"<sup>11</sup> (p. 609) and the treatment of sport as "a collective noun that hides more than it reveals",<sup>11</sup> (p. 595) a shift to better understand the mechanisms, processes, experiences, and relationships to achieve the desired social outcomes is warranted.<sup>16</sup>

Any analysis of mechanisms must be facilitated by the development of a programme theory, which is a sequence of presumed causes, actions, processes and effects<sup>17</sup>. According to Coalter<sup>11</sup> such an approach is effective in describing mechanisms. For example, Coalter<sup>18</sup> distinguished between two broad approaches of Sport Plus and Plus Sport. The Sport Plus approach to SFD prioritises traditional sport for development objectives of increased participation, sporting skill development, and sustainable sport organizations, (i.e., development of sport). Secondly, the Sport Plus approach seeks to use sport to address broader social issues (i.e., development through sport), and thus gives limited attention to the mechanisms by which sport can contribute to social change. In contrast, the Plus Sport approach prioritizes developmental outcomes (e.g., behaviour change) and focuses on specific processes and mechanisms specifically designed to achieve social change where sport plays a specific role as part of a broader set of processes. Thus far, only Green<sup>19</sup> has attempted to articulate the mechanisms by which sport can contribute to social change.

## Sport for Social Inclusion

According to Green,<sup>19</sup> sport for social inclusion programmes are designed to provide sporting opportunities to specific populations regarded as underserved, at risk, or disengaged. This approach serves sport by increasing the

number and diversity of sport participants. Participants are also served from a perspective of equity and distributive justice by providing sport opportunities to those who do not have access to homogenous participation opportunities. This categorization relies upon the various myths of sport and, according to Green,<sup>19</sup> such beliefs are so ingrained that it is not necessary to do anything more than provide access to sport because benefits will accrue as a function of participation. An example of a sport for social inclusion programme from Arnaud<sup>20</sup> described a programme that embedded the principles and values of the sports culture to minority populations. However, upon closer inspection of the use of sport in the example, sport was not serving to embed principles and values, instead only serving as a hook to “bring children, adolescents and young adults together” and as a neutral setting “by minimizing differences so to integrate immigrant populations”.<sup>(p. 577)</sup>

As a further example of sport for social inclusion, Green<sup>19</sup> referred to the case of Belfast United whereby football was used to bring Irish Catholic and Protestant youth together to form a football club. This football club served as a site that required participants to undertake integrated activities so to minimize hostilities between the Catholic and Protestant participants. Green<sup>19</sup> assumed that by “embracing the performance ethos of the competitive sport culture, participants are no longer focused on ethnic differences”.<sup>(p. 133-134)</sup> However, this assumption that sport is distracting participants from their differences is less realistic than a theory of change whereby sport is a neutral site to bring disparate groups together so that they might understand and accept each other’s differences.

In scrutinising these examples, it can be concluded that the category of sport for social inclusion fails to accurately convey the way in which sport is being used to achieve development. The emphasis on sport to ‘bring together’ participants indicates that sport added value in serving as a hook to engage participants. The assumption that the sport culture (i.e., sport’s inherent positive values) added value to encourage participants to engage in a desired behaviour does not provide a realistic understanding of the role of sport in integration. Furthermore, the assumption that sport alone can enable developmental outcomes hinders the purpose of establishing the role of sport in social change because such a contention makes no effort to understand why sport might work.

### **Sport as a Universal Neutral Language**

An arguably more accurate understanding of the examples used by Green<sup>19</sup> can be found in Pierre De Coubertin’s

vision of sport as a site for peace and cross-national understanding. Sport works because of its social and cultural significance<sup>21</sup> that acts as a hook to bring disparate groups together. However, according to Coubertin, sport works because it is ‘universalisable’ (i.e., a universal language) and provides a cultural contact point<sup>22</sup>. McCormack and Chalip<sup>23</sup> noted that specific socializing experiences that particular sport settings provide result in positive developmental outcomes. This understanding of the role of sport is reflective of Sugden’s<sup>13</sup> description of the Football for Peace S4D programme, which aimed to construct bridges between neighbouring Jewish and Arab villages in Israel. Football was used as a hook to bring the disparate groups together. However, the developmental outcomes could not have been achieved without values-based coaching to promote mutual understanding and engender a peaceful coexistence.<sup>12</sup> Sport worked as a universal neutral language to bring disparate groups together from which other programme processes could be used to promote mutual understanding.

### **Sport as Diversion**

According to Green,<sup>19</sup> the S4D category of Sport as Diversion involves diverting deviant behaviours with socially desirable ones. Green<sup>19</sup> used the example of Midnight Basketball to illustrate this category. This S4D programme in Chicago recognised the social problem of inner city criminal behaviours between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. As such, the programme was designed to reduce criminal activity via diverting participants from undesirable criminal behaviour to the desirable sport participation behaviour by providing the opportunity to play basketball between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m., when the target group may otherwise be engaged in criminal activity. In this case, basketball provided value because it was identified as an attractive sport to the target group of inner-city, African-American male youths. Thus, basketball served as a hook to attract the target group away from an undesirable behaviour; the choice of sport was dependent on the attractiveness to the intended participants. Indeed, other sports have been used for other target groups such as Midnight Table Tennis in Hungary.

As such, it can be concluded that sport is not serving as a diversion, as Green<sup>19</sup> suggests. The use of sport to attract participants is not a sufficient condition for success because in order to divert the target group away from criminal behaviours, it is also necessary to schedule the ‘hook’ to cover the period of 10pm to 2am. In this sense, it is the scheduling, rather than the sport in itself that is serving as a diversion. Thus, an accurate description of Midnight

Basketball is the use of sport as a hook with effective scheduling as a diversion.

### **Sport as a Replacement or Alternative**

A more meaningful understanding of how sport can be used in development is as a replacement, whereby sport meets the needs that were previously being met by anti-social behaviour. For example, the Walker Research Group<sup>24</sup> described how boxing clubs were used to replace the sense of community that was previously being met by gang involvement and how controlled fighting in the ring was used to replace uncontrolled fighting on the streets. Similarly, sport can also be used as an alternative, whereby sport creates a barrier to engaging in anti-social behaviour. For example, the Walker Research Group<sup>24</sup> described how the health demands of boxing (e.g., a nutritious diet and running) were used to replace excessive drinking and smoking. Of course, vehicles other than sport could be used as a replacement or alternative, but the malleability and multidimensional nature of sport<sup>21</sup> makes it a viable and highly attractive replacement mechanism.

### **Sport as a Hook**

Green<sup>19</sup> proposed sport as a hook and as a further category of S4D programmes, defining its two components as: (1) the use of sport to attract participants, and (2) the provision of other core social services, such as tutoring and counselling. Walker, Hills, and Heere<sup>25</sup> assessed an employment programme supported by an English Premier League football club, whereby participants were engaged by the football brand before employability training was delivered. The authors argued that without the hook of a professional football club, participant recruiting would have been encumbered. The value of sport as a hook can be attributed to its global following and the uniquely strong connections that sport fans have with brands.<sup>26</sup> However, as Green<sup>19</sup> pointed out that while sport can be very attractive to certain target groups, other groups might not share the similar sentiments. For example, those who more strongly identify with music, dance, art, and technology would not be attracted to a sport-based program. Yet, according to Green,<sup>19</sup> it happened to be the context of sport (and sport activities) that dominate the 'social and developmental' landscape. This could be for several reasons: (1) the passion for sport exceeds that of other potential vehicles of social change, (2) sport is a stronger hook since target groups have stronger affinities with their favourite sports/leagues/teams than with their favourite music/bands/artists, or (3) when used as a hook, sport offers something more in the delivery

of a programme, for example, as an analogy.

Although sport as a hook is the prevalent use of sport in development, a criticism of Green's<sup>19</sup> additional requirement of providing other core social services is that it excludes S4D programmes that make use of sport as a hook, but which do not provide other core social services. In returning to the example of Midnight Basketball, a component of this programme was to use sport as a hook, but the additional component was the scheduling to divert from criminal behaviours, rather than core social services.

### **Sport and Life Skills**

The use of sport to develop life skills has been broadly discussed within the sport psychology literature. For example, Danish and Nellen<sup>27</sup> described two sport-related programmes to enhance life skills and sport skills in underserved adolescents. Sport psychology techniques such as goal setting were used to teach life skills. From the description of these programmes, however, other than make use of techniques that are used within a sport setting, as well as many other settings, there is minimal leveraging of sport, other than as a hook. Papacharisis et al.<sup>28</sup> argued that sport participation teaches valuable skills and attitudes that can be applied to daily life. However, this reflects a mythopoeic view of sport.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Gould and Carson<sup>29</sup> link sport participation with the development of life skills, rather than intentionally designing sport<sup>14</sup> to develop life skills.

### **STUDY PURPOSE**

The preceding discussion underscores the existing limitations to understand how sport can work for social change through life skills education. Although a more modest understanding of the 'power' of sport and the need for it be part of a broader system of social change has been realised, the majority of research has focused on the sport conditions (e.g., intentionally designed) that contribute to social change. However, even when presented as the sport-for-development theory,<sup>6</sup> the proposed conditions are equally important to non-sporting vehicles for change. Rather than looking at conditions, greater understanding will be garnered from a focus on the mechanisms of the sport components of SFD programmes. Thus far, only Green<sup>19</sup> has attempted to articulate such mechanisms. However, there is a lack of clarity in Green's conceptualisations of the role of sport in social change.

Sport for social inclusion refers only to the outcomes desired from using sport, rather than how sport is used. Sport as diversion is a misrepresentation of the role of sport because sport is actually being used as a hook with the programme's scheduling serving as the diversion tool. Finally, sport as a hook does convey a role of sport, but the additional requirement of core social services being attached is, again, part of the broader programme systems, rather than a use of sport. As such, it can be concluded that the different mechanisms of sport in development have not been clearly articulated or fully represented in the academic literature. The study shall start to address this gap in knowledge by specifically analysing the sport mechanisms within the 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme theory. Such focus on a single programme can be justified because "given the diversity of participants, programmes, processes, relationships and desired outcomes it is not possible to develop a definitive or prescriptive programme theory – each programme requires its own programme theory to reflect its context".<sup>11 (p. 607)</sup>

## METHOD

This study engaged in qualitative research, making use of observations and interviews. This approach sought to provide a complex and holistic picture of the 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme in its natural setting<sup>30</sup> and thus attempted "to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them."<sup>31(p. 3)</sup> The strategy of inquiry adopted in this research was a case study, undertaking empirical inquiry to investigate the research phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context. 'Seedbeds of Peace' was selected as a critical case<sup>32</sup> and an example of best practice in terms of illustrating a theory of change that made use of sport as an analogy to achieve social change, which had not previously been articulated in the sport-for-development literature.

This study was undertaken by two sport management academics, one from the United Kingdom and one from the United States, and a political science academic from Medellin, Colombia. Given that the participant observations and interviews required data to be interpreted, it is important to acknowledge the backgrounds of the researchers and how these might influence the interpretation of the data. Both sport management academics have five years of prior experience studying SFD interventions in the United Kingdom and United States. As such, it is inevitable that interpretation of 'Seedbeds of Peace' will be influenced by expectations of SFD interventions from contexts outside the developing world. Although this cannot be completely avoided, the presence of a third researcher from the research

setting of Medellin added a perspective that can mitigate the lack of cultural awareness of the British and American researchers. The political science academic has a detailed understanding of the local context, having studied the social problems that 'Seedbeds of Peace' is addressing for four years. Indeed, it was through the contacts of this member of the research team that access to the programme was negotiated. These different perspectives were sought in the research team's formation so to understand 'Seedbeds of Peace' not just as a SFD intervention, but as a social act whose meaning needs to be understood with reference to the local context.

## Data Collection

Over the course of five months from the beginning of May 2016 to the end of September 2016, the research team undertook extensive fieldwork consisting of intervention observations and foundation staff interviews to develop a detailed understanding of the 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme and its use of football as an analogy. According to Patton,<sup>34</sup> case data consists of all the information one has about each case, including interview data and observations. The research team observed in excess of thirty sessions of the 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme, across different neighborhoods and across different age groups, which are detailed later in this article. Two members of the research team (the British and Colombian academics) conducted observations separately, not participating in the sessions or bringing any undue attention to themselves so as to not interrupt the natural setting of the intervention<sup>35</sup> and to help reduce the risk of participants' behaviours being modified due to their awareness of being observed. (i.e., Hawthorne's Effect<sup>36</sup>)

Prior to the sessions, the researcher had a brief conversation with the coach delivering the session so to understand the session goals. Researchers made use of a standardised observation instrument, which Heinrich et al.<sup>37</sup> illustrate, whereby notes were taken under the standardised headings of session goals, participants, activities, sport mechanisms, reflection and hypotheses between goals and mechanisms with the aim of being able to identify the sport mechanisms within the broader programme theory of 'Seedbeds of Peace'. According to Coalter,<sup>16</sup> a programme theory is a sequence of causes and presumed effects underpinning interventions, which articulates the hypotheses about the relationships between social problems, participants, programme mechanisms and processes, intermediate impacts (i.e., the effect on participants), and broader outcomes (i.e., individual behavioral or social changes).

In order to more accurately map out the ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ programme theory, six semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Chief Executive of the Foundation who designed the programme methodology. A semi-structured interview guide was designed so to fill in the gaps in the programme theory covering the topics of social problems, participants, programme mechanisms and processes, intermediate impacts and broader outcomes. Questions such as ‘What steps were taken to move participants from their original state to your desired state?’ were used. Each of the six interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and were conducted in the private office of the Chief Executive. Interviews were digitally recorded using a dictaphone and professionally transcribed in preparation for analysis.

### Data Analysis

Notes from the standardised research instrument and semi-structured interview transcriptions were analysed using an inductive coding strategy to extract themes and quotes related to the ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ programme theory. All three researchers individually analysed the transcriptions using a line-by-line open coding procedure to “expose the thoughts, ideas, and meanings contained therein”.<sup>38</sup> (p. 102) A selective coding process was used whereby only data relevant to the sport mechanisms and programme theory were analysed. Segments of relevant and meaningful text were identified with and initial codes were attributed.<sup>39</sup> Axial coding was then used to group these segments of text into larger abstract categories in order to sort, synthesize, organize, and reassemble the data.<sup>40</sup> The three researchers read each other’s memos and discussed their insights, comparing coding and categories before reaching a consensus on the findings and the selection of representative quotes. The lead author wrote up the consensus before the other two researchers reviewed to ensure accuracy. Validity of the qualitative data was ensured through: (1) the use of multiple methods of data collection (observations and interviews), and (2) the use of multiple researchers to reduce researcher bias.<sup>41</sup>

### THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

Colombia lived its darkest days in the 1980s and 1990s when the country’s illegal drug trade was at its peak bringing armed violence, terror and corruption.<sup>2</sup> The city of Medellin was at the forefront of these problems as the home of the Medellin Cartel and its boss Pablo Escobar, who during the peak of their operations were supplying 80% of the cocaine going into the United States<sup>42</sup>. Drug trafficking planted its roots in all sectors of the population and created

a culture and manner of social behavior that became ingrained in society.<sup>43</sup> Young people were among the most affected by the rise of drug trafficking and the lifestyles it proposed because they saw it as an easy opportunity to escape poverty.<sup>44</sup> As a result, society faced a loss of values, principles and a growing de-legitimization of the State.<sup>45</sup> The absence of a real understanding of the options of citizen participation, the mechanisms for the proper resolution of conflicts, and the absenteeism of citizens – generated by fear and mistrust – caused the situation to become more and more critical and also relegated citizens to be silent spectators, victims and/or perpetrators of the armed conflict.<sup>46</sup>

Today, violence in Colombia has mutated and diversified its manifestations.<sup>47,48</sup> Currently, Medellin does not face the same difficulties or the same actions of illegal armed groups.<sup>49-51</sup> However, a complex legacy of drug trafficking remains, which is a lingering culture and lifestyle based on the idea of easy money and disrespect for existing minimum social agreements.<sup>52</sup> This culture and lifestyle based upon material and aesthetic values remains the social norm. Violence continues to have an important social capital and the culture of illegality remains.<sup>3</sup> As such, illegal actors are still successful in recruiting children to their illegal and violent activities.

### ‘SEEDBEDS OF PEACE’ INTERVENTION

The Constructora Concreto Business Group (Grupo Empresarial Constructora Concreto) originated in the city of Medellin. In 1986, in the middle of the city’s darkest days, it created the Concreto Foundation (Fundación Concreto), seeking to channel its social investments and improve the quality of life for Colombians. Since its inception, the foundation has focused its actions on contributing to the transformation of the culture of illegality and developing tools to promote critical, responsible thinking among its participants. The Foundation developed different projects, which have aimed to strengthen social networks, rescue civic values and, above all, seek innovative and peaceful ways to solve problems and create an attractive future for children. Since 1990, the ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ programme has become the principal outcomes of the Concreto Foundation.

When the case study fieldwork was undertaken, the ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ programme was in operation in nine Medellin neighbourhoods. Within these nine neighbourhoods there were a total of N=25 groups in operation, broken up according to age group, looking after a total of 995 children. The Foundation was in contact with

the children for one session of two hours per week, every week for the whole year. At the start of each year, each group chose what they would be doing throughout the year, which became their vehicle for social change. Educational or diversionary vehicles chosen included graffiti, dance, arts and crafts, theatre and cooking. The most popular choice, as would be expected in Colombia, was football. Out of the 25 groups, 6 chose football.

### Target Group

'Seedbeds of Peace' operates in a variety of Medellin neighbourhoods and the Concreto Foundation assists them in identifying neighborhoods with the greatest need. Neighborhoods are selected for participation if they meet three conditions that the Foundation has defined. First, neighbourhoods lack social and economic opportunities as informed by Gobernación de Antioquia and Alcaldía de Medellín in their quality of life survey. Second, these neighborhoods have illegal groups that are operating in the barrio, as informed by local police. Finally, the neighborhoods have a high ratio of at least 20% of under 18-year-olds, as informed by local police. To achieve greater impact, the Foundation begins its training process with children aged between 7 and 10 years old with an expectation that children remain with the Foundation for several years, potentially until they leave school at 17, 18 or 19 years old. The typical duration of participants in the programme, however, is five years. As a result, participants engage in a process of growth over several years. There is an even number of boys and girls participating in the programme, the majority of whom are white, with some Afro-Colombian and indigenous participants.

### Programme Theory

The 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme takes a preventative approach to the above social problem. The 'Seedbeds of Peace' aims to redefine the target groups' values system so that it is based upon moral values, rather than material and aesthetic values that come with a culture of illegality pursuing 'easy money' through criminal activities to escape poverty. The Concreto Foundation defines values as the important and lasting beliefs about what is good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable and desirable or undesirable. They believe that these beliefs have a direct influence upon behaviour and whether the target group go on to engage in pro- or anti-social behaviour. For a long time, 'Seedbeds of Peace' focused only on strengthening the moral values of its participants. However, in 2014, a new chief executive identified a need to, in addition to strengthening the moral values of participants, develop the life skills of participants.

The Concreto Foundation's view of life skills as an important moderating factor between values and behaviour change. Even if the target group has a positive values system, they do not have the life skills to execute behaviours that would typically manifest from a positive value system and they remain vulnerable to negative influences and illegal actors. Life skills mitigate the vulnerability of participants to risks by increasing their individual resilience. As such, in order to elicit pro-social behaviour, the Foundation seeks to provide a safe and positive framework and environment, whereby participants have the opportunity to not just develop or redefine their values systems, but also to equip participants with life skills. This approach helps ensure that programme participants have every opportunity to live their life in a manner which reflects their beliefs about what they believe is right, acceptable, and desirable.

### CASE STUDY FINDINGS

The teaching of life skills alongside the strengthening and redefining of moral values was achieved via three separate components of the 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme. The first component of a 'Life Skills Curriculum' used football as an analogy to establish life skill principles via a football game or drill before extending and applying it to other contexts. The second component of 'Moral Dilemmas' involved the discussion and reflection of moral dilemmas in football matches before extending and applying these to other contexts. The third component of 'Life Projects' tested and applied participant learning of life skills and redefining of moral values, so to reinforce development from the other two components.

### Life Skills Curriculum

The 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme used football as an analogy to deliver a life skills curriculum. It was observed across many sessions with different groups and different coaches that life skills principles were first established via a football-based game or drill before being extended and applied to other contexts. For example, to teach decision-making, 'Seedbeds of Peace' used a game whereby participants undertook shooting drills under two different conditions. The aim of the game was to accurately shoot the football to marked corners of the goal. First, participants, one-by-one, received a pass from the coach and were required to shoot the ball at the targets without being permitted to take a touch or control the ball first. Second, the drill was modified so that participants were required to receive the ball by first taking a touch, so that the ball was controlled. Then, the coach encouraged the students to take

their time and consider their options before executing their shot.

After several rounds of this drill in both the conditions of hitting the ball first time and controlling the ball before striking, the coach called the group together to reflect upon this drill. Reflection involved participants sitting quietly and the coach addressing questions to the group. Those who wanted to answer would raise their hand and the coach would select one to three participants to answer each question. The participants were asked whether they were more effective and accurate when they tried to hit their shot the first time, or after they controlled the ball and took their time before shooting. As expected, participants generally responded that they were more accurate and effective when using control and taking their time. The coach then asked participants to reflect upon why using control and taking their time allowed them to shoot more accurately and effectively. As expected, they generally responded that when shooting the 'first time' they were not given the opportunity to analyse the shooting situation, to look up and see their targets and to make adjustments to themselves so that they were in the correct position to receive the ball and shoot accurately at the targets.

Finally, the coach asked the participants to reflect on being controlled, taking their time and analysing situations before executing an action and whether this principle could be extended and applied to other areas of their lives. As expected, the participants generally responded that being controlled, taking their time and analysing situations would lead to more effective decision-making in a variety of aspects of their life. For example, some participants referred to examples where their friends ask them to participate in something that is wrong, such as drinking alcohol or smoking. By not being controlled and analysing the situation some participants reflected that they were more vulnerable to peer pressure and thus more likely to engage in such behaviours, but if they were controlled, took their time and analysed such 'wrong' behaviours, they would be more likely to make the 'right' decision of not engaging in such acts. Using football as an analogy, the 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme also sought to develop the life skills of prudence, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy and emotional regulation. These life skills have been identified by the World Health Organisation as the necessary aptitudes required for effectively developing and facing life. According to the Foundation Chief Executive, participants required these skills because, we were aiming to strengthen their value system, but we realised that the kids did not have

the tools at their disposal in order to behave morally. For example, in order to choose to not participate in crime, our kids need to have other options in life.

### **Moral Dilemma Reflections**

It was also observed across many sessions, groups and coaches that football was further used to discuss and reflect upon moral dilemmas. Some 'Seedbeds of Peace' sessions were dedicated to football matches, utilising the standard rules of the game whereby the group was divided into teams and rotations so that all teams played each other. Experiences during these football matches were used to discuss and reflect upon moral dilemmas. At the end of all the matches, before the end of the session, the coach called the group together to reflect upon moral dilemmas related to a specific value. For example, following one session the coach asked participants to reflect upon honesty. He asked if a player on the defending team had last touched the ball before it went over the goal line; he, as the referee, had not seen this and incorrectly awarded a goal kick instead of a corner kick, so he questioned how should the defender

### **Life Projects**

Finally, the 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme engaged participants in year-long life projects using their chosen vehicle of change, football, as detailed in interviews with the Foundation Chief Executive. Within the context of the programme, a life project is a project that aims to improve the everyday life of their community by overcoming a social problem. At the start of the year, each group was asked to identify a social problem in their community. As described by the Foundation Chief Executive, "one of our groups were concerned about drug dealers in their community and the use of drugs by friends and classmates as young as eleven years old." According to the Chief Executive, the coach and other Foundation staff empowered participants to design and deliver a life project that would help alleviate this social problem using football as a vehicle for change, whereby a group hosted a football event for their community.

Members of the community, including parents, teachers and friends, were invited by the group to attend the event. The event commenced with football-based games and drills that the group designed and delivered in connection with messages they wanted to deliver to combat the social problem of illegal drugs. For example, there was a game that required heading the football, which was used as an analogy to accompany the message, 'use your head, don't take drugs'. Other messages included 'tackle wrong decisions', 'analyse situations to make a good move', 'score

your life goals' and 'give drugs the red card'. These messages were also painted on signs and put up around the football pitches where the event was being held. The group also made bracelets for event attendees with the messages on them, which were given out at the end of the event.

It was the intention of the Foundation Chief Executive that the life projects strengthen the moral values of participants. The Foundation Chief Executive recognised that,

*Whilst skills can be taught via a curriculum, values are internal beliefs that cannot be taught. As such, we simply wanted to provide the children with the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon moral issues and engage in moral acts to benefit others.*

According to the Chief Executive, the life projects provided such an opportunity by encouraging participants to think about problems they faced not just by themselves but also by others in their community. The life projects also provided a platform to discuss moral issues. As observed in several sessions, participants were asked to reflect upon how they could help others and why they should help others. In the process of choosing a social problem, participants were asked to reflect upon the causes of a social problem and the choices of actors within that social problem. They were asked to reflect upon whether the behaviours of actors linked to the social problem were right or wrong, moral or immoral and to reflect upon why this was the case. According to the Foundation Chief Executive, such discussions provided an opportunity for participants to strengthen or redefine their moral values. The Chief Executive reflected that,

*The life projects serve to reinforce strengthened or redefined moral values by putting participants beliefs into actions, so that they could experience the feelings associated with helping others and acting in a moral fashion.*

## DISCUSSION

By focusing on sport mechanisms, as Coalter advocates,<sup>11</sup> rather than conditions<sup>13,6,14</sup>, it has been possible to provide a vivid description of a previously undescribed role of sport in social change, which can be described generally as 'sport as an analogy'. An analogy is a comparison between things that have similar features in order to help explain a principle or idea. The 'Seedbeds of Peace' programme designed football so that comparisons could be made to other contexts so to teach life skill principles and reflect upon moral dilemmas. Specifically, with the life skills curriculum, a football-based game or drill is designed to reflect a principle

or idea associated with a life skill. Through the football-based game or drill, it is intended that participants will gain an understanding of the principle or idea as it relates to football. Following the game or drill, participants are asked to reflect on what they have experienced and to articulate the principle or idea. Once coaches infer that participants have understood the principle or idea within a footballing context, they ask participants to reflect upon other contexts where that principle or idea would be important and useful to them. Through a well-designed game<sup>13</sup> that delivers a clear principle or idea, it is intended that participants will be able to identify how the principle or idea can be applied in other contexts.

Football has the potential to work effectively as an analogy for social change for several reasons. First, as already well established in the SFD literature, sport serves as a hook to engage target groups.<sup>19</sup> Football is the sport that Colombians are most passionate about, so it follows that it should work effectively to hook participants. However, unlike Green's category of sport as a hook, which relies on non-sport processes for development once sport has worked as a hook, football also serves as the analogy, so to achieve development. Sport works well as an analogy because, if well designed, it is fun and meaningful. For example, without the use of football as an analogy, teaching the principle of stopping and thinking in order to problem solve is highly abstract and thus has limited associations that participants can make in order to learn the principle. It is suggested that using sport can take abstract concepts and apply these concepts using the rich content of sport, so that deeper learning occurs.

The finding that sport can be used as an analogy in an attempt to achieve social change speaks to the flexibility of sport, rather than the romanticised notions that sport is blessed with inherent properties that will achieve social change.<sup>7,11</sup> In order for sport to function as an analogy it has to be well designed<sup>13</sup> and intentionally designed.<sup>14</sup> However, the use of sport as an analogy was only identified when analysing sport mechanisms for social change, as Coalter advocates,<sup>16</sup> rather than analysing the conditions that sport needs to meet in order to deliver social change.<sup>6</sup> This mechanism was discussed within a broader programme theory,<sup>17</sup> whereby sport served as a hook<sup>19</sup> but also as an analogy so to take a Plus Sport approach,<sup>18</sup> and functioned as both a necessary and sufficient conditions for social change.<sup>11</sup> Although the effect of sport as an analogy on life skills was not tested, this study shows that the use of analogies creates clear links between sport and life skills; participants are likely to be more effective in developing life skills than if they had simply participated in sport.<sup>28,29</sup>

## Research Implications

This study established a way to use sport in development that had not previously been articulated within the academic literature, which adds to the number of ways that SFD practitioners can leverage sport for social change. Rather than simply using sport as a hook,<sup>19</sup> sport can now be used in a more integrated manner that increases its influence within a broader system of change. Within the ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ programme, sport was still utilised to engage a target group, but the engaged sport was also designed to teach life skills and redefine moral values. Using sport as an analogy provides a flexible tool whereby sport can be intentionally designed<sup>14</sup> to deliver a potentially unlimited number of messages and principles that, in turn, can contribute to a potentially limitless number of social outcomes. As such, sport’s ability to engage no longer just gets participants in the door, but it can be used to engage participants in the components that impart the desired change. For example, Walker et al.,<sup>25</sup> described the use of a Premier League football brand to engage unemployed youths in employability training. The sport brand was used to ‘sign up’ participants, but after the sign-ups, that generic employability training was used to achieve the employment outcomes. In contrast, ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ engaged participants with football, but also kept participants engaged in the wider processes designed to develop life skills and redefine moral values.

## Limitations

This study only analysed the mechanisms and processes of ‘Seedbeds of Peace’, rather than measuring its effect. As such, it is not possible to draw conclusions on the effect of utilizing football as an analogy. Rather, this study only describes the untested mechanism of using sport as an analogy. The practical implications of this study would be greater if ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ was found to have a significant effect on participants learning life skills and redefining moral values. Such a study could be conducted via a quantitative experimental design where these significant effects were mapped against the mechanism of football as an analogy in order to instil greater confidence in the ability of sport as an analogy to contribute to social change.

## Future Research

This study has highlighted a previously unarticulated sport mechanism for social change, but there are likely many other sport mechanisms still to be defined within the

academic literature. Further case study research of SFD programmes may identify further sport mechanisms to add to the toolkit of S4D practitioners. Also, so to complete the picture of the ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ programme, future research is needed to understand its effect as well as the processes by which it operates. A longitudinal quasi-experimental study is already underway, measuring the life skills and values of participants. Comparator groups within the ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ that use alternative vehicles for change (e.g., music) and also control groups not in receipt of any intervention have been established in order to measure the effectiveness of both ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ and also sport as an analogy in relation to other vehicles of change. If a statistically significant effect of ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ is found, there can be greater confidence in the use of sport as an analogy. In comparing the use of sport with other vehicles of change, it may be possible to isolate the effect of sport by holding all variables other than the vehicle of social change constant. In mapping mechanisms to differences in effect, greater understanding of how sport works in social change can be achieved, overcoming limitations of the SFDT<sup>6</sup> that proposed conditions equally applicable to other vehicles of change.

## CONCLUSION

The Conconcreto Foundation has leveraged Colombians’ passion for football in an attempt to tackle the lingering problem from the illegal and violent culture created by Pablo Escobar and the Medellin Cartel. The ‘Seedbeds of Peace’ Programme designed football so that comparisons could be made to other contexts; such a design also taught its participants life skill principles and how to reflect upon moral dilemmas by using football as an analogy, which has not previously been discussed in the academic literature. Articulation of this sport mechanism has extended understanding of how sport works for social change beyond sport as a hook,<sup>19</sup> adding to the toolkit of SFD practitioners.

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