

DUNKING AIDS OUT: GAMES APPROACH TO HIV/AIDS EDUCATION

Davies Banda and Oscar Mwaanga, Sheffield Hallam University, UK

Context

Can sport be used to make HIV/AIDS prevention messages more effective than non sport-based workshops organised for young people? If so, how can this be done? How can sport be used to provide strategies capable of promoting HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention among youths at risk of contacting HIV? How can sport be used to socially include people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA), those likely to face exclusion due to stigmatisation? These questions can be daunting for anyone who considers how sport programmes might positively influence the lives of young people, especially young people living in areas experiencing economic dislocation and communities where the HIV/AIDS pandemic has been declared a national disaster and is the African continent's worst enemy.

Dunking AIDS Out¹ on a basketball court looks at ways in which the issue of HIV/AIDS can be addressed in a more serious but fun-based approach, providing an atmosphere where the participants are engrossed in the fun part of games, enjoying the activity as well as learning life-saving skills and moral development. Coalter et al (2000) believed that sport is more effective when combined with programmes addressing wider personal and social development. The approach using the power of sport to combat or tackle social problems believes that motivation and fun are very closely linked. Enjoyment is an important factor for learning, and this is integral to the development of using movement games to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS

Methodology

This material is based on practical experience of field workers in sub-Saharan African involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of sport-oriented Non-Governmental Organisations, using the power of sport to fight the pandemic. The work presented here is from individuals who have been brought up in this environment of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, who have worked across the region implementing movement games, and have based their postgraduate studies on Sport and HIV/AIDS Education.

Results and Discussion

Our research tends to support the UNICEF (2004) document *The Power of Sport* which made a public acknowledgement of how sport could be used in human development. UNICEF acknowledged the role that sport can play in helping combat the world's social problems such as HIV/AIDS, education and protection of children from war, abuse and child labour.

Our research revealed the following elements were essential to help learning of HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention and inclusion of PLWHA: *Attraction; enjoyment; identification; and accommodating*. Dunking AIDS Out seeks to focus on the fun aspect of games or drills to create a suitable environment for peers to share experiences and learn more about HIV/AIDS.

Sport appeals to all, to affluent and poor, young and old, and cuts across barriers of society. HIV/AIDS infection too knows no social barriers. It is this same element of sport being able to cut across social barriers that makes it an effective tool to use for fighting HIV/AIDS.

Participants are empowered with knowledge through their involvement in the *Dunking AIDS Out* approach to HIV/AIDS education. The empowerment in terms of life skills gained is crucial for transformation that brings about change in the life of individuals and societies. As people enjoy the

¹This concept is taken from Kicking Aids Out, it has developed into a manual for coaching basketball entitled Dunking Aids Out by Davies Banda and Oscar Mwaanga. The Kicking Aids Out (KAO) concept was publicly launched in February 2001 with over 700 youth marching through the streets of Lusaka, Zambia. EDUSPORT Zambia as the pioneer of KAO has been using movement games since 1998 in its work tackling HIV/AIDS using sport through using peer coaches.

experience of participating in sport, HIV/AIDS information is shared in a relaxed, non-scary atmosphere. On the contrary, fear has been used as a motivating factor for people to learn about HIV/AIDS. But in sport, learning is achieved in a relaxed environment where the participants are deriving enjoyment from their experiences.

HIV/AIDS sports programmes are conducted from a Sport for All philosophy or policy. This accommodates all people to participate in sport, as a contrast to elite sports. These activities are conducted in the participants' neighbourhood and utilises local open spaces. When elderly people speak to the youth about the dangers of HIV/AIDS, the latter tend to think of this approach as imposing, a kind of force is experienced. However, when peers share information with each other, it facilitates much learning as it is done in their natural settings (playing fields), hence the use of the peer coaching approach in conducting HIV/AIDS education sessions.

Implication/conclusions

This paper seeks to demonstrate the realistic approach to tackling education awareness, prevention and inclusion of PLWHA using the power of sport to educate participants though Sport, like most activities, is not a priori good or bad (Patriksson 1995:128). *Dunking AIDS Out* and other KAO programmes attempt to conduct these activities in conditions that are necessary for sport to have beneficial outcomes: developing life skills, empowering participants, and providing a means of creating identity and a sense of belonging.

References

- Banda, Davies. (2003): *Evaluating the role of sport orientated Non-Government Organisations in the fight against HIV/AIDS* Unpublished Masters thesis Loughborough: Loughborough University
- Banda, D. & Mwaanga, O. (2005, in progress) *Dunking Aids Out Manual* Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University
- Coalter, F., Allison, M. & Taylor, J. (2000) *The Role Of Sport In Regenerating Deprived Urban Areas* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive, Central Research Unit
- Mwaanga, O. S. (2002) *Kicking Aids Out* NORAD
- Mwaanga, O. (2003) *Empowering HIV/AIDS at risk adolescent girls through participation in Soccer and EduSport* Unpublished Masters thesis Oslo: Norwegian University of Sport and Physical Education
- Patriksson, G. (1995): *The Significance of Sport for Society - Health, Socialisation, Economy: A Scientific Review*, paper for 8th Conference of European Ministers for Sport, Lisbon, 17-18 May Strasbourg: Council of Europe

Contact: Davies Banda, 0114 225 5847 D.Banda@shu.ac.uk