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## **SPORT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: PERSPECTIVES FROM URBAN AND RURAL GHANA**

Submitting author: Dr Emmanuel Owusu-Ansah  
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, SPORTS DIRECTORATE  
ACCRA, LG  
Ghana

All authors: Emmanuel Owusu-Ansah (corresp), Adam Baba Tanko  
Zakariah

Type: Professional Practice

Category: H: Sport-for-development - Exploring global and local futures

### **Abstract**

Aligned with the growing international prominence of sport-for-development, there are an increasing number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Ghana that utilise sport in order to contribute to individual, community and national development objectives. Especially for such NGOs, who often work with limited governmental support, issues of sustainability and evidence regarding their impact of their work are strongly connected. Despite increased international academic interest, there remains limited research regarding both sustainability and impact that specifically draws on local perspectives from African communities. Moreover, research that compares the use of sport-for-development in rural and urban communities is notable by its absence. The research presented in this paper is drawn from a wider and ongoing project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, that examines sustainable development through sport in both Ghana and Tanzania which aimed to address some of the limitations identified above. In particular, the paper will examine:

- Evidence regarding the achievement (or otherwise) of sustainable development outcomes through sport across rural and urban communities in Ghana
- Factors that support or hinder the achievement of sustainable development through sport across rural and urban communities in Ghana

### **CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

The conceptual basis for the wider research project was based on Lindsey's (2008) four components or dimensions of sustainable development, namely:

- 1) Individual Sustainability- Longer term changes in individual's attitudes

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and behavior through involvement with the sports development programme.

2) Community Sustainability- Maintenance of changes in the community in which the sport programme is delivered.

3) Organizational Sustainability- The maintenance or expansion of sport development programmes by the organization responsible for their delivery, and

4) Institutional Sustainability- Longer term changes in policy, practice, economic social and environmental conditions in the wider context of the sports development programmes.

This paper will focus on research undertaken by staff from the University of Ghana and University for Development Studies in Ghana that focused on individual and community dimensions of sustainability in particular. The ongoing research has been undertaken across a total of four of Ghana's ten regions and specifically at selected school and community sites across four areas in rural northern Ghana and three urban areas in southern Ghana. Qualitative interviews and focus groups with co-ordinators, teachers, coaches, young leaders and participants in different sporting programmes and activities have been undertaken. While this research is ongoing, these interviews and focus groups have thus far involved approximately 60 individuals. Thematic analysis of collected data is ongoing but has been undertaken separately for rural and urban locations before being combined for this paper.

## RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As data collection and analysis is ongoing, a full exploration of findings and conclusions will be presented at the time of the conference. Initial themes regarding the impact of sporting activities and programmes include:

- the combination of sporting and personal development outcomes that are evident from young people's involvement in sport both as participants and leaders
- the wider impact of sporting activities on schools and communities
- the potential of sporting activities to address local issues of ethnicity and gender

Initial analysis has also highlighted the importance of the following issues in addressing sustainability of impact and activities:

- maintained involvement of young people in sporting activities and programmes
- the availability of financial and material resources
- encouraging local interest and ownership with regard to sporting activities
- further training for, and continued motivation on behalf of, sport coaches and teachers
- the need for greater support and collaboration across various levels of

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government and different organisations

In considering these issues and others emergent from further data collection and analysis, the paper will compare and contrast their relative importance in urban and rural areas. The conclusions will identify implications for the development of sport-for-development programmes in rural and urban areas both in Ghana and potentially in other locations.

### **References**

1. Lindsey, I. (2008). Conceptualizing sustainability in sports development. *Leisure Studies*, 27, (3). 279-294.