

Olympic solidarity: evaluating equity in Olympic funding programmes

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Abstract

According to the Olympic Charter, "the aim of Olympic Solidarity is to organise assistance to NOCs, in particular those which have the greatest need" (IOC 2011, p.17) The aim of this paper is therefore to evaluate the extent to which this redistributive claim is evidenced through an analysis of the distribution of the Olympic Solidarity funding. Over five decades Olympic Solidarity (OS) has provided a vehicle through which the Olympic Movement has channelled aid to National Olympic Committees (NOCs), as a means of promoting development, with funding allocated to the NOCs from the sale of Broadcasting Rights for the Olympic Games, through 'World Programmes', 'Continental Programmes', and 'Olympic Games Subsidies'. In the 2009-2012 quadrennium it is disbursing \$134m. through its World Programmes (with a further \$122m. distributed by the Continental Associations of NOCs).

Literature review

Changes in distribution policy of Olympic Solidarity as a result of global political issues, and changes in the organisation itself, are reflected in its funding opportunities. There has been little work that addresses OS policy change, notable exceptions include (Housfi, 2002; Al Tauqi 2003; Henry, 2008; and Chamerois, 2006), and that which does focus on OS undertakes no analysis of funding policy. The current paper thus addresses a gap in the literature, and one which has significant relevance for Olympic policy. Through a statistical analysis of patterns of grant aid, the study seeks to identify the nature and extent of funding, and in particular the extent to which funding remains 'progressive', supporting those NOCs most in need.

Statistical analysis undertaken incorporates

- Descriptive analysis of the Programme Grant and Olympic Games Subsidy on a quadrennial basis – in effect an account of 'who gets what';
- Analysis of correlation between grant size and selected variables of GDP per capita (a measure of affluence, and thus an indicator of financial need), Full-Time Employees (indicating the level of professionalisation of NOCs applying for funding); Internet Users per capita (indicating level of technological development); NOC years in operation (experience); and Population (size);
- Standard Multiple Regression to identify any contribution of the selected variables to explanations of variance in the dependent variables of size of grants received.

Results and discussion

Descriptive Statistical analysis indicates a non-linear increasing level of funding for the Programme Grant from 1985 to 2008, with large disparities in range between individual NOCs, even in the same continent. Olympic Games Subsidy data (which funds participation in the Games and is linked to team size) follows a similar pattern; the disparity also evident between continents.

Correlational analysis illustrates a statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) **negative** Pearson correlation of .288 to .404, between the GDP per capita and the OS Programme Grant, indicating that starting from the quadrennium 1989-1992, NOCs with a lower GDP per capita had access to more Programme Grant funding than NOCs from more affluent countries. Expenditure patterns up to the period 1997-2000 reflect the re-distribution philosophy of Olympic Solidarity, after which the correlation, while still significant and negative, decreases, possibly due to a change in policy opening up programmes formerly reserved for the less affluent to the more developed NOCs. A statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) **positive** Pearson correlation between Olympic Games subsidies and GDP per capita, of .282 to .379, suggests that higher subsidies were disbursed to NOCs from more affluent countries to support participation in the Games (principally because they send larger teams).

Regression Analysis highlights the *population size* and *NOC experience* as the main unique contributors to the explanation of variance in the Programme Grant during the first two quadrennia, later replaced by the *GDP per capita*, increasingly making the highest statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) unique contribution. Although *NOC experience* made a minor contribution, the *NOC level of professionalism* and *communication*, made the highest statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) unique contribution to the explanation of variance for the Olympic Games Subsidy, during all quadrennia.

Conclusion

The data presented in this paper highlights a progressive pattern of disbursement of the Programme Grant, consistent with Olympic Solidarity aims. This is increasingly evident (though trailing off in the last two quadrennia). This progressive trend however, is, to some extent, neutralised by the pattern of Olympic Games subsidy, benefiting NOCs primarily from the more 'affluent' countries. Inequalities between core and periphery in the Olympic world are thus only partially addressed by Olympic Solidarity.

References

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