

SPORT INSPIRES ME

PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH SPORT FOR CHILDREN AND THE YOUNG AT RISK LIVING IN SUBURBAN SLUMS

Helder Santos, Pedro Peres
Câmara Municipal de Lisboa

Formulation of objectives and strategies

It was decided by the municipality the major challenge of promoting social inclusion of children and young people at risk, through the regular practice of physical activity. To achieve this goal, were defined the specific objectives: to assure children and the young people can access sport activities in municipal facilities, to develop civic values in the scope of Sport, to empower the partners field actions, to enable neighborhoods residents to develop their own regular sport activities and to build an alternative life project in the Sport area and to stimulate families' participation in the education process of their children.

Process

According to a social diagnosis one of the most disadvantaged and problematic neighbourhoods was chosen to initiate the pilot strategic actions. A methodology of intervention was defined, based on the development of a dynamic partnership with local public and nongovernmental social entities. Each one chose the contact persons to integrate a Multidisciplinary Team composed basically by technical staff. These persons have a long experience and knowledge of the community, specifically of children, youth and their families and also of the existing social dynamics, which means they have the capacity for social intervention. Following this first step, it was decided that the actions should be divided in three axes: - Regular sport activities. To promote the participation of children and youngsters, already organized by the partners, general physical education and dance activities were developed because they don't have their own facilities or technical staff.

- Education/Non-formal Education activities. To build new positive references taking advantage of the technicians influence in the neighbourhood we are developing activities for the training of some local residents in order to include them in the development of regular sport activities for the community. Activities are also being developed to increasingly involve the parents in their children educational process making them more loving towards them.

- Citizenship activities. With a pre-established non-regular periodicity, some activities are carried out with the specific aim to create a feeling of identity and belonging, stimulate self-identity and a binding. In this sense, we have group activities such as workshops, reflection sessions to enable the participants to define the rules and Sport Festivals opened to the community to show the work that has been developed and to promote the Fair-play environment.

This methodology was applied in four other neighbourhoods of the city, considering the necessary adaptations attending their particular social contexts. After a regular and permanent evaluation we started the project and his actions.

As you can easily understand, sport alone does not have the ability to solve the problem of social exclusion. Only an integrated action will tend to get more satisfactory and lasting results. Still, we knew from the beginning that the intervention's key priority and the project development success was depending on the ability to remove children and young people from the non-occupation process to which they were relegate. Here yes, sport can position itself in a condition of large advantage over many other intervention strategies. It was exactly the highly attractive character of sports activities that allowed the children to come to occupy his time in municipal sports facilities and the teams have now the possibility to work on the development of personal and socials skills of these groups of participants.

Lessons learned

The fact that we include participants and the community in the construction and implementation of the project helps to fight many social weaknesses, in particular the social inclusion of children and young people at risk and their family members. Another important strategy of the project is the existence of intervention 2 axis that addresses the issues of non-formal education and training of human resources.

The aim is to qualify local actors so that in future the activities have all a local technical framework, i.e. they can be persons from the community to develop activities in and to your neighbourhood. Another facet that is directly related to the social and economic sustainability is the requirement to ensure an equitable participation of both genders.

The project has been constituted as a database of ideas, with regard to policies to promote inclusion through sport and, the relationship between the teams of the municipality and the community at risk of social exclusion. Also the results achieved with community participation in decision-making and implementation are motivating a revolution in the planning municipality way and today the community has the possibility to participate in the construction of the annual budget and to propose new projects.