

Successfully Combining Sport With Disaster Relief

Implementing a sport programme in a post-disaster area is more than just bringing a ball and telling people to kick it around. In fact, if done improperly, these efforts can actually cause more harm than good by further dividing an already split community. This is why it is important to learn proper strategies, which will be discussed during ICSSPE's 2nd Sport in Post-Disaster Intervention seminar, being held in Germany from 1-7 November 2008.

For 15 years, Christoph Schwager was a senior officer with the Swiss Rescue Team, and has worked on relief efforts in Iran, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Cuba, and the Ivory Coast. Schwager has learned many lessons on what works and what doesn't. Schwager explained, "The worst is when people from abroad come and bring their own culture with them. To cure traumatised children, you need more than sport material – you need a lot of empathy, cultural background, knowledge about religious attitudes, and the rules and behaviour in the society."

Trevor Dudley, who has worked in projects in Africa for over 25 years, added "Listen to what the children want. Listen to what the community wants. Involve everyone to gain acceptance and ownership. This creates sustainability."

Sport activities in relief efforts have evolved over the years. Back in the early 1990's, Schwager explained that sport activities were just for fun and used as a diversion. But about a decade ago, after observing children who were traumatised in the Balkan states, relief efforts started adopting and adapting sport activities to fit the affected area as part of a concentrated strategy.

Dudley's endeavours through The Kids League (TKL) Uganda have benefited over 45,000 children since 2003, and given relief efforts often have limited resources, officials are always looking for ways to have maximum impact. Accordingly to Dudley, establishing, developing and executing a programme, which can involve providing training to 400 volunteers and improving the lives of 10,000 boys and girls over a whole year, can cost between 30,000-60,000 Euros, depending on location and outreach spread.

From 1-7 November 2008, the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education will host its 2nd Sport in Post-Disaster Intervention seminar in Rheinsberg, Germany, featuring experts such as Christoph Schwager and Trevor Dudley. For more information, and to register, visit www.icsspe.org.

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