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# POVERTY AND SPORT: STORIES FROM THE HOMELESS WORLD CUP

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**Abstract**

The Homeless World Cup is becoming one of the famous sporting events held annually for participation of homeless people in the world. Over 600 homeless players from a total of 65 countries played in the 2015 event in Amsterdam. According to the Homeless World Cup Foundation, the sense of empowerment that comes from participating in street football helps homeless people see that they can change their lives (Homeless World Cup Foundation Official Website).

The foundation has 74 national partners that conduct activities and programmes for poverty reduction or social development in each of the 74 countries. As the situation of poverty and even the definition of poverty vary in different areas of the world, the national partners have significant roles in providing domestic programmes based on their grass roots needs.

The purpose of this study is to verify the stories sent by some media, such as 1) Web pages (Official Web Site, Facebook and Blog), 2) Images and Pictures (YouTube, Videos), 3) Dramas. Field studies were conducted from January 2011 to August 2015 on 54 related persons totally, mainly by personal interviews.

In the first section, outlines of the Homeless World Cup and the Japanese team are given. Based on this, I verify the contents of these stories and discuss the characteristic of the media itself. In many web page contents, I can find the contrast between the tough lives and the bright smiles of the players in photos and videos. The balance of their severe present situations and the ambiguity with which they look forward to a better future shows us a glimmer of hope in the fight against poverty. Additionally, the life episodes of each player give us clearer understanding of poverty issues, and we can well imagine the importance of the Homeless World Cup for each player.

In conclusion, the core significances of the Homeless World Cup are the image it projects, its role as a device and a hook to support the national partners in resolving issues related to poverty in each country, from the grass roots, using football. Moreover, the Homeless World Cup offers the opportunity for participating players to gain self-esteem, the trust of others, and hope and pleasure in sharing sport

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experiences.

Key words: Homeless World Cup, media image, poverty reduction, Sport for Development and Peace

## 1. Introduction

The field of Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) has rapidly progressed since the mid-1990s. During the bidding activities for hosting the 2020 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo, Japan declared the implementation of the "Sport for Tomorrow" programme. This embodies international contributions through sport, and is attracting much attention as a unified area of development studies and sport science. The Japan Society of Physical Education, Health and Sport Sciences is considering establishing a new sector for international development through sport and proceeding with studies of the SDP field in order to fully meet the future demands of society and academia.

The fundamental cause and central issue of development and peace in most cases is financial "poverty." The "Development Cooperation Charter"[1], which the Japanese government modified in 2015, clearly specifies the following three important aims: (1) "quality growth" and poverty eradication through such growth, (2) sharing universal values and realizing a peaceful and secure society, and (3) building a sustainable and resilient international community through efforts to address global challenges. Japan considers poverty reduction to be at the heart of development and peace.

Although sport contributing to the eradication or reduction of poverty generally may sound over-ambitious, there are successful efforts being made in this direction. One such activity that has been growing worldwide is the Homeless World Cup. This is a world futsal game in which only homeless people from around the world can participate. It was established in 2003 with the aim of "getting rid of the homeless condition from societies and giving opportunities to people who are in a state of homelessness to change their lives"[2]. It is an annual event which is hosted by a different country each year[3].

As a part of their activities, messages that tell the stories of people who have become alleviated from poverty and gained independence in society, by playing soccer or futsal, are sent out along

[1] This is a basic development support policy by the Japanese government that was decided upon by the Japanese Cabinet in February, 2015. It was revised for the first time in 11 years, and used to be called the ODA Charter. In the Development Cooperation Charter, "securing the national benefit" was clearly written at the first time.

[2] Quoted from Homeless World Cup's homepage http://www.homelessworldcup.org/ [2011/08/20]. Translated by the author.

[3] The 2015 tournament was held in September in the Netherlands, where 65 men's and women's teams participated.

with notifications on Homeless World Cup events. The definition of independence differs and the seriousness of poverty varies from country to country, but the expected roles of sport is significant as a means to approach the common issue of poverty in nations whose backgrounds are all different.

## 2. Purpose and Method of the Study

### *2-1. Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to investigate the expected role that the Homeless World Cup will play. This study is positioned as a first step for research on the relationship between "poverty reduction" and "sport," and is not a study to assess results or to judge whether activities succeeded or failed with respect to the Homeless World Cup and its associated activities.

### *2-2. Method of Study*

The study combined participant observation at the Homeless World Cup, interview surveys given to players and personnel, and evaluation of visual materials. Participant observation was conducted in the daily practices of the Japanese team, Nobushi Japan (multiple times at Osaka and 3 times in Tokyo), in events such as player try-outs, and in the executive committee meetings of Sport for Social Inclusion, in addition to the actual tournaments in Paris, France: August 21 to 28, 2011, in Amsterdam, the Netherlands: September 12 to 19, 2015, and in Tokyo, Japan: in the Diversity Cup in July, 2015[4)].

As for the interview survey, we conducted individual interviews with each of Nobushi Japan's 34 members, both personal and group interviews during the period from January 2011 through August 2015. We also interviewed 8 staff members at the Paris tournament in August 2011, 5 staff members at the Amsterdam tournament in 2015, and 7 staff members of a Korean partner group, Big Issue Korea, in February of 2014. The interviews took place face-to-face in the Japanese or English languages at the tournament venues, cafeterias, headquarters, offices, and practice fields of each group in Tokyo, Osaka, Paris, Amsterdam, and Seoul.

The interviewer had chances to participate in these activities as a volunteer and chat with interviewees and executive committee members even outside of activity hours. Moreover, communication with people who were not designated interviewees and the knowledge and information obtained from them are reflected in the study results.

We used the following 3 items as visual and theatrical materials.

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[4] Prior to the Diversity Cup, "Sport for Social Inclusion Executive Committee" was formed. Crowdfunding, which is fundraising over the Internet, for the tournaments was conducted and collected donations of 1,065,000JPY for the target amount of one million yen.

1) “Kicking it”
(Japanese title: “Homeless World Cup”)
Documentary film directed by Susan Koch and Jeff Werner. Footage of players in South Africa, Spain, and Afghanistan until entry to the tournament, and how they changed throughout the process.

PHOTO 1. “KICKING IT,” DVD

2) “Hors-Jeu Carton rouge contre l’exclusion”
(Offside: a red card for social exclusion)
A 90 minute French documentary TV programme broadcasted in 2011 that covered domestic activities in Japan, Argentina, Palestine, France, and Kenya. The scenes associated with the Japanese team in this film were transcribed from the film in the French language to be translated into Japanese.

PHOTO 2. One scene of Hors-Jeu Carton rouge contre l’exclusionho-mupejiyor.
Source: TV Programme website

3) “NO GOAL”
A stage play by a group named “Seishun Jijou (Adolescence Sensibilities)” in July 10 to 14, 2013 and June 27 to July 1, 2014 at Shimokitazawa Ekimae (station front) theater.
The theme of this play was Japan’s Nobushi Japan team, and the incorporated NPO group, The Big Issue Foundation, which had supported their plan.
A DVD that recorded the stage performance was sold.

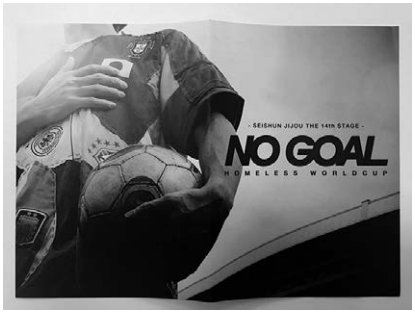


PHOTO 3. “No Goal” Programme booklet
Source: Theater group, Seishun Jijou

## 3. Homeless World Cup and Japan's Activities

### *3-1. What is the Homeless World Cup?*

The Homeless World Cup is an international futsal tournament exclusively for homeless people, as the name indicates. It was founded by Mel Young of Big Issue[5], a world renowned social enterprise. The tournament is organized by the planning committee of the host country, and the activities which take place in each participating country, such as regular practice sessions and the selecting and placing of players, are carried out by 74 national partners.

Defining the concept of "homelessness" in a way that applies to every country in the world is not possible. In some cases, it is not just that homeless people are poor and do not have a place to live. There are also cases where they are not given equal opportunities for education and welfare. Many of them have criminal records, a history of drug use or alcoholism, or a mental disorder. Some of them deal with several of these issues. Another reason is that the types of people who are considered to be homeless vary in different countries due to differences in legal systems, family structure, public aid systems, etc. (Okada 2014).

For these reasons, partner organizations knowledgeable about poverty and homelessness in countries participating in the Homeless World Cup are in charge of the activities that take place before and after the tournaments. Naturally, the content of the activities, as well as the expectations held in regard to futsal, and the role given to the tournament in the context of activities as a whole, also vary by country (Okada 2014).

Individuals 16 years of age or older who have never previously played in the tournaments and fulfil the following criteria may participate in the tournament: (1) were homeless for a period of three weeks or more, or made a living selling street papers, in the year up to the day of the tournament (2) were treated for drug or alcohol addiction within the past two years (3) lived in exile or submitted an asylum request within the past year. The tournament lasts for about a week, and consists of both league and tournament formats. Every team plays one to two games a day up to the final day of the tournament, as not even the lowest-ranking teams can be eliminated in the preliminary round. As shown in Figure 1, the rules, unlike those of official futsal, are set up in a way that, as much as possible, allows anyone to play while still keeping the tournament interesting as a competitive event. These original rules, which control the level of competitiveness appropriately, clearly demonstrate the aim and objective of the tournament, which is to compete to exhibit the best teamwork rather than the best individual skills (Okada, 2012).

[5] Big Issue produces and sells street papers for the purpose of generating jobs for homeless people. It was founded in London in 1991, with 4 titles in the U.K. 9 titles are sold in the world (South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Australia, Korea, Taiwan and Japan).

*3-2. Japan's team, "Nobushi Japan"*

Nobushi Japan is the team that represents Japan in the Homeless World Cup, and was sent to the tournaments at Gothenburg in 2004, Milan in 2009, and Paris in 2011, by The Big Issue Japan Foundation, a non-profit organization. The Big Issue Foundation provides people under the condition of homelessness[6] with (1) life independency support programmes, (2) job hunting support programmes, (3) sport and culture activity support programmes, and provides interested members of the public an opportunity to participate in this social support programme. The series of processes towards participation in the Homeless World Cup is a part of (3), the sport culture activity support programmes. Futsal activities which include periodic practice aims to (1) create hope for homeless people via hobbies and leisure, (2) provide equal communication opportunities to recover connections with people, and (3) generate "confidence" and "commitment to persistence" by having participants accumulate small successful experiences of goals or victories (Hasegawa, 2011).

"Many homeless people have lost not only their homes and jobs in the process of becoming homeless, but their connection with people, life purpose, and the will to live", says a staff member with responsibility for Nobushi Japan. "Also, homelessness is much more than not having food to eat or a job. They have no one to talk to about their problems. It is an issue of isolation. On top of that, wanting to escape homelessness, they have a hard time accessing the information they need. Team sports such as football give people who are socially isolated in this way the opportunity to regain their connections with people, something to live for, and hopes and aims"[7]. Although the aim of Nobushi Japan's activities is to play in the Homeless World Cup, there are some years when that is not the target, when their main activities are practice sessions held twice a month in Tokyo and Osaka. In addition, Nobushi Japan has some other achievements, particularly involving social exchanges with various organizations through futsal activities. These include scrimmages with related organizations and practice sessions and workshops held through collaboration with private businesses.

After the financial crisis of 2008, The Big Issue Foundation felt a sense of danger regarding homelessness spreading among the younger generations[8]. Young homeless individuals usually stay in Internet cafes or 24-hour cafeterias or at their friends' homes, and it is difficult to judge who is in a homeless condition at a first glance. At a "Young Homeless Support Network Meeting" held in cooperation with those who are concerned about deepening problems, the fact

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6 The Big Issue Foundation defines "homeless" as "condition where individuals have no housing, though they may have a shelter (Internet cafes, facilities)" = people under houseless in addition to generally called homeless that is a "condition without roof (sleeping outdoors)" = people under the condition of roofless (The Big Issue Foundation, 2011).

7 Excerpt from the crowdfunding "Moon Shot" website, "Diversity Futsal Cup: Give opportunities of interaction through sport to people with diverse backgrounds!"

8 The Big Issue Foundation refers to homeless people under 40 years old as "young homeless people." Due to the difficulty in finding jobs for the young, unstable employment, and issues regarding companies with bad ethics, poverty among those in their 20s and 30s is definitely increasing.

■ Date/Time: Saturday July 4th, 2015 9am – 1pm
■ Venue: National Yoyogi Stadium Futsal court, Tokyo
■ Participants: 10 teams (those with experience of living on the street, jobless young people, those defined HIKIKOMORI, those who suffered depression, people raised in childcare centres, young people from disaster-affected areas, LGBTs, those who used to be school truants, NEATs)
■ Game system: two 7 minute-halfs (league matches with 4 teams)→tournaments to the final
■ Host: Sport for Social Inclusion Executive Committee /The Big Issue Foundation
■ Timetable
9:00 Opening ceremony (Explanation of rules and icebreaking activities)
9:50 Kickoff (Court 1/ Court 2)
13:00 Closing ceremony (Court 2)
13:30-16:30 Lunch/Networking event
(18:00-20:00 Open games at the futsal court)

Figure 1. Overview of the Diversity Cup

that "homelessness issues, NEAT/HIKIKOMORI kid issues, disability issues, and issues of children growing up in childcare facilities, are all connected under the surface" came to light (Big Issue, 2013). Moreover, Okada (2014) pointed out that, without taking measures against it along with institutions, it cannot be denied that growing numbers of potential young homeless individuals will be out on the streets when their baby boomer parents' pensions are terminated. An intermittent voice was heard from this network meeting that futsal activities could be an effective possible approach especially towards issues of young homelessness. As a result, The Big Issue Foundation held the Diversity Cup (Figure 1)[9], as a new undertaking while continuing its usage activities with Nobushi Japan.

This Diversity Cup was held as a means to take countermeasures against issues that include young homelessness, as well as to select members for the Japanese team to the Homeless World Cup from among a large number eligible individual.

*4-1. Poverty and sports communicated through text*

The Homeless World Cup is conducted by "The Homeless World Cup Foundation," and its website posts (1) information on the tournament, (2) introductions of teams from each country, (3) information on calls for donations and sales of official goods. During the annual period of the tournaments, the main information displayed is regarding (1) information on the tournaments, such as game results and voices from the players, the coaches, and the spectators. For a certain period after the tournament, (2) introductions of teams from each country and (3) calls for donations, and sales of official goods mostly fill up the spaces on the website, but on Facebook,

[9] 146 players and 28 volunteers gathered at the tournament. 28 games took place in front of approximately 50 spectators. After the first round match was performed in 2 leagues, a tournament among upper and lower ranked teams was conducted. There were lunch and networking events after the games.

information focuses on the "individual voices" from each country's team, players, referees, volunteers, media, and supporters throughout the year. The Facebook page as of September 10th, 2015 had received about 39,000 "Like"-s and the average points of the user reviews recorded as high as 4.7.

The Big Issue Japan Foundation, the organizer of the Japanese team, runs a blog titled 'The Homeless Football Project' on its official website. The Foundation also shares information on the team's daily activities via the Nobushi Japan Homeless Football Facebook page (fan site) as well as on the Nobushi Japan official website. The blog provides short captions for photographs of team activities. However, in recent years, this has shifted increasingly to Facebook. A collection of more detailed information can be found on the Nobushi Japan official website. There are pages there such as 'Activities and Achievements' and 'Media Coverage' that are updated with information, and the content is organized to allow browsing it back through the years. There is extensive use of photographs on the blog, the Facebook page, and official website, and means have been taken to convey the atmosphere of the activities.

The official website used to have a running essay which consisted of 15 episodes, titled the "Homeless Old Guy's World Cup Chronicle," by a participant of the 2011 Paris tournament[10]. It describes scenes from the tournaments and among the teams, while showing some glimpses into the difficulties of human relationships and homeless life. On the other hand, the rhythmical narrative conveys the feverish excitement of the tournament and its uplifted players.

> *I first took up football casually, just to get some exercise. But the longer I played the more fun it was. Then when I learned that the Japanese team was aiming to play in the Homeless World Cup, football became my goal, my dream. I didn't expect to make the team but now that I had a dream, each day became a little more enjoyable. I was able to take a step forward. Then when I made the team, I felt as though I could now go through the procedures for escaping homelessness, for getting off the streets. The tournament in Paris was indeed the starting point for me. I learned a lot in Paris. I experienced bitter disappointment and the difficulty of the tournament. The players competed with one another just about every day. In Paris, I felt how important and how difficult it was to lock horns with each other, masks off.*
> (Mr. M, captain, Paris 2011 Homeless World Cup)

Merely describing the activities carried out at the Homeless World Cup or by Nobushi Japan does not go far in conveying the significance of the Homeless World Cup as an activity for supporting homeless people, or of practising futsal. But interviews with players who participated in the tournament and essays they have written will give people an idea of the importance of the activities for each player. An interview with a player on the Zimbabwean team can be viewed

[10] It was posted on the Nobushi Japan website, until September 20 2015.

Photo 4. A player from Zimbabwe at the 2015 Amsterdam tournament
Source: Homeless World Cup website[11)]

on the 2015 Homeless World Cup in Amsterdam page.

> *"I have a vision; I have a dream," he says, consciously echoing the famous words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "One day, in my community, it will be better. We will be a community of educated young people."* (Source: Homeless World Cup website)

Preceding the interview is a description of how the player lost his home and of various hardships he had faced in his life until then. This may be the first time for most people reading it to learn about the particular problems[12)] surrounding the life of this Zimbabwean player. The player's goals and dreams, as well as his photograph (in which he is standing upright looking straight ahead), as communicated through the website convey a strong message about the meaning of the Homeless World Cup as a beacon of hope in an otherwise difficult life.

When conveying something through writing, it goes without saying that the writing is based on the writer's or communicator's subjective view. On the other hand, subjective writing, particularly of the kind that tackles the issues of homelessness and poverty head on, is a double-edged sword, as it has the potential to distance the reader from the problem as one in a distant land that doesn't affect their lives. Writing carries a weight that is important when conveying the difficulty or severity of homeless life or how the person conveying the message or the people

[11] A comment and a photo of a Zimbabwean player are posted on the top page of Homeless World Cup website https://www.homelessworldcup.org/ [2015/09/18].

[12] In Zimbabwe 2005, the Mugabe regime executed a policy called "Murambativa," which controlled illegal street venders' businesses and illegal residency in suburbs. They were put people in custody and destroyed makeshift homes. They say that more than 20 thousand people were arrested, and over 600 thousand people lost their abodes.

around them changed by participating in the tournament, while materials that lighten the weight of the words and offer an objective view of the subjective information are essential as well.

Many of the photographs accompanying the written descriptions on the Homeless World Cup and Nobushi Japan websites express optimism and joy, balancing with the heavy and gloomy facts which are presented in the writing. Combining writing and photographs is meaningful in that the two mediums provide a glimpse of poverty and homelessness—which are likely to be themes that most people are unfamiliar with—and also create a balance between subjectivity and objectivity.

*4-2. Poverty and sport conveyed by images*

Japan, along with many other countries, has shared YouTube videos for public viewing with information on its teams and their activities. In many countries, professional filmmakers have undertaken the filming and editing as volunteers, and some of the videos are highly professional. Starting with the 2011 tournament in Paris, footage of all the games began being streamed, allowing people to watch the tournament from anywhere in the world over the Internet. For the 2015 Homeless World Cup in Amsterdam, Southfields, a new sponsor, handled the filming and editing and EverSport handled the video streaming. Furthermore, during the tournament, highlights from 84 games (viewed 8,246 times) as well as 29 other videos entitled "Back Stage" were streamed[13]. The "Back Stage" videos consisted of interviews with players and staff members from various countries as well as videos on non-game-related topics.

Documentary films and television programmes about the Homeless World Cup were also produced in the past. "Kicking It", a film about the Homeless World Cup in South Africa, was released by film directors Susan Koch and Jeff Werner in 2006, and the film was released in Japan under the title "Homeless World Cup". A player from a well-known Mathare refugee camp in Kenya talked about his daily life as follows.

> *I have had a very hard time so far, you know. My family is poor. We didn't have enough food. I couldn't go to school. Starting soccer finally brought me hope. I put my all into practising soccer. If I succeeded, I could get out of this terrible life. I can be happy, I thought.* (Omission) *What's in my mind is always soccer, like I am living for playing soccer. If I didn't start soccer, I might already be dead, you know. Now, my future is in South Africa. Someday I will say goodbye to this kind of life. No more cleaning toilets. I will be a pro soccer player. I will make my dream come true and make a living off of soccer.*

[13] As of September 20, 2015, which is after the 2015 tournament.
YouTube channel "Match Highlights"
(https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnHc6ARgu0pN0RG8GXS-2yelmx7JI8Jjp)
[2016/09/20] and " Watch Behind the Scenes"
(https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnHc6ARgu0pNoNIeUYBbP0SdraEVFqOC) [2016/09/20]

(Alex: a Kenyan player at the Homeless World Cup, South Africa tournament)

This player, Alex, who seriously aimed to be a professional soccer player, considered the South Africa tournament as a place to showcase his ability. Because the style of his playing could not be considered team playing, and on top of that, because he did not listen to his coach, he was eventually suspended from the games. Moreover, the Kenyan team could not make it to the upper ranking groups in the final tournament. This taught him the extent of his own capabilities as a player and the hardship of being a professional athlete. It is difficult to explain Alex's impatience, hesitation, and arguments with his coach in texts or photos, but his facial expressions, words, behaviors, plays, and interactions with other players and his coach as shown in the video depict Alex's vivid personal conflicts. It also brings to mind many other players' mental changes that might have been experienced. As a side note, after returning to his country, Alex became an assistant coach of Kenya's Homeless team, and participated in the 2008 Melbourne tournament and the 2009 Milan tournament. He became an assistant coach for the professional Kenyan soccer team in 2010 to realize his dream of making a living from soccer, despite the result being different from how he had originally intended it to be. Furthermore, a player from Ireland is featured toward the end of this piece.

*Four months later, Simon reverted to drug use, and died. It was a year and a half since his last use. His death was a blow to his companions living in the outskirts of the society.*
(Subtitle, Image: Simon, Irish representative player)

In the documentary film, neither the process of Alex's dreams coming true nor the change Simon underwent after the tournament is addressed. However, it is not difficult to imagine how big the mental, social, and economic changes the representative members experienced with the Homeless World Cup as a starting point were. This film concludes as follows.

*One year since the tournament, many found new meaning in their lives, and two-thirds of them improved their lifestyle. More than a third found permanent jobs. 93 individuals have overcome their substance independency. Half of them have improved their lifestyle and have kept playing soccer. Just a single ball changed their lives.*
("Kicking It!" Narrator: Colin Farrell)

Needless to say, from the example of Simon, it is obvious that playing at the Homeless World Cup does not always result in a positive impact on every player. However, at the root of "Kicking it!," the optimistic cheerfulness of those who believe in or seem to hope for positive effects from the Homeless World Cup runs throughout the film. On the other hand, the 90 minute French documentary TV programme, "Hors-Jeu: Carton rouge contre l'exclusion" (Offside: a red card

for social exclusion) in 2011 conveys a different tone. It describes the processes preceding the Paris Tournament of players from Japan, Argentina, Palestine, France, and Kenya. In particular, the programme introduces Japan as follows.

> *Each year Japan's selection committee for the Homeless World Cup secretly sends one team to the tournament. It is a voluntary initiative that makes for a provocative statement, lifting the covers off a 'certain fact which the Japanese government denies'. That certain fact is that there are tens of thousands of homeless people all across Japan.*
> (Narration in Hors jeu, carton rouge contre l'exclusion)

The story is centered on interviews with a certain player. After uncovering his current lifestyle and mental situation, the programme tells his motives for playing futsal.

> *When you're living on the streets, finding rest is really difficult. You have to find a good place by yourself. Being alone for a long time, you start to hate yourself, or just feel emotionally drained. Sometimes, I become deeply depressed and feel mentally damaged.*
> (Mr. M from the Japanese team, "Hors-Jeu: Carton rouge contre l'exclusion")

This player was not chosen to be a member, but his statement about what he felt after the announcement for the selection was as follows.

> *Actually, I don't feel too down on myself. Well, if I have another chance to participate in the World Cup next year, I will work hard for it.*
> (Mr. M from the Japanese team, "Hors-Jeu: Carton rouge contre l'exclusion")

In contrast to the film, "Kicking it!", glimpses of darkness can be seen throughout the programme. The Homeless World Cup is described as a glimmer of light that shines on an otherwise harsh daily life and the tournament sparks a sense of courageous optimism even in players who do not make the team.

Several patterns can be found in the footage: Firstly, the edited scenes from daily activities, games, and the Homeless World Cup, secondly, the interview scenes or comments added and reorganized based on facts, thirdly, the introduction to specific instances such as drug or alcohol dependency, along with some examples. These patterns are effective in presenting images of homeless people in their playing and in their behaviours while taking part in interviews wearing their uniforms. The methods utilized in this film are much different from the conventional ways that had been used to convey homelessness issues.

On the other hand, the seriousness of individual problems of the players cannot be seen unless the producers deliberately intend make it known. The stage plays and the behaviors of the

Homeless World Cup members have the tendency to cover up the problems existing in the background of their futsal playing. The way in which this characteristic is utilized greatly changes how the messages are received regarding homelessness or poverty, though it may convey the excitement of soccer or futsal itself.

*4-3. Poverty and sport conveyed through stage plays*

During the period of July 10th to 14th, 2013, as well as June 27th to July 1st, 2014, a stage play entitled "NO GOAL — Homeless World Cup" was performed by the theater group Seishun Jijou (Adolescence Sensibilities) at Shimokitazawa Ekimae (station front) theater. This event was planned and supported by The Big Issue Foundation Japan. The settings for the characters, the backgrounds of the characters, and actual episodes were reflected from events experienced by Nobushi Japan in the 2011 Homeless World Cup. The performance starts half a year before the Cup, and each time the stage dims, the story advances in time until the last day of the Cup, which was set to be held in Mexico. There were only 2 stage sets, the locker rooms in Japan and at the Mexico Cup.

The locker room scenes in Japan start with meeting the new coach then develop to scenes of team practices, and preparations for the trip to the tournament are described. At the Mexico tournament, where they march in after overcoming their many difficulties, the Japanese team loses a game and an oppressive atmosphere pervades within the team which triggers troubles between members. However, towards the end of the tournament, the team builds up their will to fight, and the performance concludes with a scene where a circular formation is formed that symbolizes the team's solidarity.

On the stage, the changes and conflicts of not only the players but also of the volunteer members and staff are described. The following piece of dialogue is between a volunteer coach and a staff member of the delegation group.

*Volunteer coach (Coach): It's tough, isn't it?*
*Staff member of delegation group (Staff): What do you mean?*
*Coach: I hope they get together as a team to be strong. But the way they're playing right now, they're not a team. Everyone's moving the way they want. I don't know how to say it, but… they don't seem to be good at communicating with one another.*
*Staff: They are just clumsy, you know.*
*Coach: I have no idea what they are thinking.*
*Staff: They might just not know how to express themselves.*
*Coach: I hope you don't take this the wrong way, but I get the feeling that there's a reason after all.*
*Staff: What do you mean?*
*Coach: I mean, there has to be a reason that they became like this,*

*Staff: What do you mean by 'like this?'*
*Coach: Like… jobless.*
*Staff: They all have a different reason.*
*Coach: They might have their reasons, but they do seem like they're asking for trouble. Well, sorry if I've said too much.*
(NO GOAL Dialogue between a volunteer coach and a staff member)

In another scene, it becomes known two weeks before the team is to leave for the tournament that one player still has not received his passport. This was because he had gambled away the money he had been given from the support organization in advance to cover the cost for acquiring a passport. The player had promised the staff of the dispatching organization that he would quit gambling. He would be disqualified from playing in the tournament because not only had he spent the money but he had broken his promise, too. Since he was not permitted to borrow money again to get his passport, the player, with the help of his teammates and the volunteer staff members who want him to play in the tournament, hurriedly try to come up with the money to pay for the passport.

Later in the play, in a scene at the Homeless World Cup in Mexico, the relatives of a certain player show up at the tournament and scold him for playing in a tournament that declares to the public that he is homeless. Out of a sense of shame, they attempt to take him back to Japan. As the player's relatives try to force the player to leave, the other players stop them. The player then delivers the following line.

*I'm not going home. I won't do it. My teammates need me. I came here to represent Japan, so I'm staying here until the end, until the tournaments is over. Let me play to the end.*
(Line delivered by player in No Goal.)

The play progresses through several episodes, most in the first half focusing on individuals. Although several players or staff members are on stage, they have complementary roles. Each episode has a leading character chosen from among not just players but coaches and volunteer staff members. However, from midway on through the latter part of the play, as the tournament nears, the team becomes the focal point. It is in this process of group formation, as expressed on stage, that the real value of the Homeless World Cup lies.

I watched the 2013 and 2014 performances as well as the DVD of the 2015 performance, and the impression each stage play had on me was completely different. I was amazed to find that even if the script is the same, how the story is interpreted by the performers or viewers can vastly differ. I suspect that the viewer's (my) level of understanding of homelessness, poverty, and the Homeless World Cup and level of involvement with Nobushi Japan might have an effect on how the story comes across. I believe that viewers' perceptions might also vary depending on the

number of times they have watched the play. I will refrain from any further analysis, as I am no expert on theatrical performances, but I felt that the stage had a sense of immediacy that invited the audience to ponder, there and then, what they were seeing and take it in. In other words, I believe that the amount, quality, and capacity of information the viewer possesses at a particular moment will inevitably affect how the story makes itself felt. Furthermore, it is easy to imagine that each viewer will have a very different interpretation or perception of the story and that may well be what makes the stage so interesting and complex.

## 5. Conclusion

Through the study, many people used the terms ‘symbol’, ‘medium’, or ‘springboard’ when describing the significance of the Homeless World Cup. In terms of its being a goal or attainment point, the Homeless World Cup is not only an annual international tournament, but serves as a motivator in everyday life activities in each country. This study examined stories from the Homeless World Cup taken from a wide range of mediums including writing, photographs, video footage, and theatrical performances. All shared the common trait of conveying the Homeless World Cup in both episodes and images: episodes involving individual players and each country’s teams and, in particular, images in the form of photographs and video footage. Furthermore, the stories depict all kinds of dichotomies: the dichotomy of making things easy to understand vs. the severity of the issues, of creating a sense of empathy vs. the realities of a different world, of optimism in pursuit of victory vs. the sluggishness of daily life, and of individuals’ particular circumstances vs. coming together as a team. Also, however much the shading and coloration of the stories may differ according to the intentions, the target audience or the medium of the creators, they are stories that form a mixture of elements that convey facts and of elements that are purposely created through acting.

This contrast will most likely be the key to drawing people’s attention to the issues of poverty and homelessness. This study dealt with works other than those from Japan, but dealing with poverty or homelessness in Japan would also require reviews from other perspectives. Particularity in understanding “poverty” in Japan, Mizushima (2007) says: “‘Self-responsibility’. It is a convenient term—at least when it is being applied to those who are seen as being supposed to bear such responsibility. Without realizing it, we are pressured into ‘putting up with it’, and always made to assume that ‘it’s our own fault’. Whenever something happens, it’s a question of who takes self-responsibility. Japanese society is cruel that way. This concept has permeated our thinking to such a degree that it can be called the ‘self-responsibility disease.’”

In addition to this trend running at the base of this society, lack of opportunities to report poverty and difficulties in how to communicate are also major barriers. It is said “poverty” entered the public limelight in Japanese media in the recent years between 2000 and 2010, which makes the history of this issue quite short in comparison to that of some other countries. Around

this period of time, documentary TV programmes such as “Nippon Poor Society” (2006), “Working Poor” (2006) and “Internet Cafe Refugee” (2007) were broadcasted, and some general interest books, such as “Elite Working Poor” (2007), “Current Poverty” (2007), and “Reporting on the Very Bottom of Society” (2007) were published. In 2007, the Anti-Poverty Network[14] established a “Poverty Journalism Award” in an attempt to continue propagating communications regarding “poverty,” but we must say that this is still insufficient compared to countries where poverty is covered in daily news.

There is a strong need to talk about poverty in various ways, and in that sense the significance of the Homeless World Cup as a symbol is revealed. In the case of Japan, however, talk about poverty is characterized not just in terms of self-responsibility, but by “assigning the poor a noble, good, stubbornly hardworking ‘gallantry’, as if by some type of unwritten rule” (Mizushima 2007). Furthermore, Minashita criticizes the view held by many Japanese people that they would help people who are sitting unobtrusively, quietly waiting, obedient and accepting help, but they would disregard needy individuals who seemed as not needing help even though both are in pitiable circumstances[15]. When telling people about the Homeless World Cup, we must avoid anything that amounts to propagating a stereotype of homeless people or poverty, such as the homeless players who appear to be “doing their very best” or to be “disadvantaged but brave”. The depiction of the players who participated in the Homeless World Cup as being optimistic and extremely motivated, aiming to stand on their own feet, is in some ways the truth. However, the significance of the Homeless World Cup must be assessed by examining the struggle the players went through to get to the tournament and how they changed, as well as how their lives continued after they returned to their home countries. At the same time, the true significance of the tournament is not to be found in the overdone rolling out of the players as icons in the “brave and doing their best” mold. Rather, it lies in achievements that remain with individuals and that can somehow contribute to solving the issues of homelessness and poverty. Significance of this kind is difficult to express in some mediums.

In Korea, where there is a moral tone of self-responsibility with respect to poverty much like in Japan, players “with an intriguing history” are deliberately chosen to play in the Homeless World Cup. Players, whose personal information can be disclosed to the public as much as possible, including that of their early life and photographs, are chosen. Their past, present, and future are shared with the public through various media outlets as an example of an individual who is overcoming (or has overcome) poverty. An emphasis is placed on raising awareness about homelessness and poverty in society as a whole. Rather than benefitting the players, this

[14] Network group founded in 2003 to prevent poverty from expanding. They conduct anti-poverty assemblies and anti-poverty festivals to visualize invisible poverty, and are calling for the necessity of cooperation with groups and activities.

[15] A statement by Ms. Kiriu Minashita in an interview article, “Is ‘Poverty’ a Showcase?” from AERA February 23th, 2015. Excerpt from a part of AERA No. 28, Vol. 8, P. 21-23.

strategy aims to bring about changes in Korean society in the near future.

In Cambodia, where the per capita gross national income is USD 1,020[16], poverty and homelessness are issues relevant to everyday life; but raising awareness of these issues is difficult for a different reason from Korea and Japan. The organization that sends the Cambodian team to the Homeless World Cup is Australian, and focuses its efforts on informing the global community in English. While most of the on-field activities in Cambodia are handled by Cambodian and Australian coaches, the operation of the organization as well as duties related to participation in the Homeless World Cup are handled by core supporters who provide assistance from afar, from such countries as Australia, the United States, Canada, Thailand, and Ireland. Happy Football Cambodia Australia (HFCA)[17] shares information widely via their website, Facebook page, and YouTube, and also sends out newsletters from time to time to those who have registered for free as members on the website. Members learn about the organization's activities, which they support by making donations or purchasing official goods. Core supporters form from among those members interested in providing further support.

It is inevitable that the target audience as well as methods used for conveying information will vary depending on the circumstances surrounding poverty and homelessness in each country. In some countries, for instance, making fundraising the primary objective of information provision and actively soliciting donations and aid are completely acceptable. There is no need to explain that it is a social issue: people will understand and support your cause if they are provided with appropriate, prompt, and regular information concerning your approach to the issue (Grogan 2015). In cases like this, examining the significance of the Homeless World Cup in terms of symbol, medium, and opportunity is easy. However, in societies where issues related to homelessness and poverty do not have immediate relevance to people's lives, the discussion must begin by explaining the organization's stance in relation to the challenges surrounding poverty and homelessness, which is the starting point for talking about the Homeless World Cup. However, with respect to this issue of "stance", there may well be subtle differences depending not only on the person conveying the message but on each party, supporter, or person involved. As a result, difficulties in conveying the purpose of the activities accurately often cause misunderstandings, which become an obstacle when communicating on a broad, mass scale with people throughout society. On the other hand, however, this may have the potential to eliminate the stereotypical images of homelessness and poverty described above and create a broad range of opportunities to talk about social issues.

[16] Extracted from World Bank data of 2014. See http://data.worldbank.org/country/ [2015/09/30]

[17] Happy Football Cambodia Australia teaches soccer as an activity at 4 orphanages in the suburbs of the capital, Phnom Penh. See https://hfca.org.au/ [2015/09/30]

## 6. Closing Remarks

This study demonstrated that the Homeless World Cup holds significance as a means of publicizing stories about poverty and homelessness, which in the past was considered to be difficult to do for various reasons. However, who the information is conveyed to, what is conveyed to them, and the objective for conveying the information are crucial. More specifically, the methods to be used will obviously vary depending on what approach is taken, for example, efforts made to raise awareness about poverty and homelessness on a broad, public scale, or discussions with those interested in poverty issues, or efforts to promote understanding among those involved with sports, or communicating information to those interested in both poverty and sports.

The works that were examined for this study do not portray the "dream" of players escaping their old life and making it big as football players. What is important is whether or not those who are presented with the facts depicted can keep in mind that, ordinarily, most of the homeless players who take part will go back to their previous lives. Presenting images of enthusiastic homeless players evokes in people a feeling of affinity with the players while also turning their thoughts to the difficult circumstances of the players' daily lives. This feeling and this realization lie in two very different directions, but the images demand of the viewer the imaginative effort of bridging the gap between them.

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