

Title	Confronting Gender Issues with Sports for Development and Peace : The case of Zimbabwe
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Citation	Osaka Human Sciences. 2023, 9, p. 45-62
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/90709
rights	
Note	

Osaka University Knowledge Archive : OUKA

<https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/>

Osaka University

Confronting Gender Issues with Sports for Development and Peace: The case of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The aim of Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) is to use sport as a tool to overcome social issues related to poverty, health, education, peace building, ethnic reconciliation, and such. The field of SDP has been developed since the mid-1990s internationally, and later in Japan, for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. The international contribution through sport is implemented as a Japanese governmental program titled “Sport for Tomorrow.” Another discussion about the contribution of sport to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has recently begun, and the consideration of the new role of sport in the post-COVID-19 society is also needed. Although the expected roles of sport are various in the context of SDP, more rigorous and pragmatic verification will be required to represent the inherent significances of sport at several levels such as in society, local communities, organizations, and individuals.

The expected role of women in international development has been growing in many sectors. In 2015, the former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, declared “we cannot achieve our 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without full and equal rights for half of the world’s population, in law and in practice.” In this study, the author attempts to verify an SDP example of “woman” and “Africa” where it is thought that for a long time, less attention has been paid not only in the context of sport itself, but also in SDP. This study aims to reconsider the value of sports for women in Zimbabwe, Africa, by inspecting sports activities conducted under difficult circumstances.

The author focuses on SDP activities performed in a suburb of the capital city, Harare, Zimbabwe. A Zimbabwean non-governmental organization (NGO), “Young Achievements Sport for Development: YASD,” has launched a new international program for women named “GOAL,” which is funded by the Standard Chartered Bank. This program focuses on the vulnerable women who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and attempts to spread social knowledge about women’s “health,” “money saving,” “empowerment,” and “self-esteem” through sports and physical exercise. The author implemented an inventory survey for the coaches of the YASD Goal program to clarify the contents, outcomes, goals, and clients’ problems, and to investigate the SDP activities for women performed amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: sport for development and peace; gender; Zimbabwe, COVID-19

¹ This article is the English translation of the original one “Okada, C. (2022). Sport for Development and Peace to Overcome Gender Issues: A case in Zimbabwe. *Bulletin of the Graduate School of Human Sciences, Osaka University*, 48, 89–108 (in Japanese)”.

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1. Introduction

A variety of sport activities designed to promote development and peace-building are conducted worldwide; however, there is no simple program to achieve development and peace through sports. Although practicing sports creates changes in society and in individuals, debate on the characteristics and intrinsic value of sports that promote concrete changes is scarce. This study focused on African women who are positioned on the periphery of development and peace-building, and aimed to reconsider the value of sports by examining sports activities conducted in the face of social difficulties, which has not received sufficient attention to date.

The concept of Sport for Development and Peace (SDP), which has evolved since the mid-1990s, aims to utilize sports beyond participatory or viewing purposes to address social issues. Recently, it has been utilized within the realm of international development and sports practices and policies. The 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games served as Japan's international contribution to sports and aimed to use sports to contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the Japan Sports Agency, other goals included "encouraging people to realize that sports can contribute to solving various social issues, raising awareness of SDGs, and changing consciousness and behavior."¹⁾ Advancements in the SDP field contribute to policy and academic pursuits and serve as a legacy following the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The role of women in the fields of development and peace-building has become increasingly important in the 2000s. The African Human Development Report (United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 2016) stated that "development ambitions cannot be realized if half of humanity is left behind." The UNDP Director-General stated that "SDGs cannot be realized without dealing with gender inequality and discrimination against women," indicating that, in addition to addressing discrimination, women have an important role in the struggle to promote development and peace. This is especially relevant in sub-Saharan Africa, where the gender gap remains large, resulting in an annual loss of US\$95 billion. It is clear that development cannot succeed without solving the gender issues, and without introducing women's power into the process of development.

This study focused on SDP activities of women in the Republic of Zimbabwe (hereinafter referred to as "Zimbabwe") in southern Africa. We conducted a questionnaire survey of coaches involved in Young Achievement Sports for Development (YASD),²⁾ a local non-government organization (NGO) in Zimbabwe, to gain an understanding of their activities. This study aimed to clarify the purpose, significance, and challenges of SDP activities for women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Research background

2-1. *Young Achievement Sports for Development (YASD)*

YASD is an NGO established in 2005 in the suburbs of Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe in southern Africa. It was registered with the government in 2007. In 2005, following the general election, the Zimbabwean government implemented the Murambatsvina policy, which bulldozed suburban slums and outlawed open-air stalls, as the slums and people living there were deemed to cause economic and security deterioration that were prevalent at the time³⁾. This forced locals to flee and greatly affected the Hatcliffe area where YASD operates. According to a United Nations (UN) report, approximately 700,000 people nationwide lost their homes and livelihoods due to this policy.

Hatcliffe (Ward 42), located in the northeastern part of Harare, approximately 16 km from the city center, had 11,686 households and was home to 45,344 people when Murambatsvina was implemented. The area was ravaged until “few community facilities, such as waterways, roads, health facilities, schools, and playgrounds, remained” (National Statistics Agency, 2012), with a resettlement site designated approximately 5 km away. There was no infrastructure, such as roads, water, sewage, and electricity in the resettlement area, which had rolling terrain and poor soil. People were forced to live in tents and cinder block structures built with the support of domestic and foreign NPOs. The harsh conditions they faced were reminiscent of desolate refugee camps.



Photo 1. Resettlement community



Photo 2. Simple dwelling

YASD was established to support the lives and education of children and adolescents in the area. YASD’s representative, Petros (2016), recognized “the need to create smart communities and people” following Murambatsvina and launched three programs: education support, youth support services, and sports training. As the name of the organization suggests, these programs focused on sports. Regular futsal training, team sports, and competitions were held to provide opportunities for children and adolescents in the area to play sports. Furthermore, regional issues were illuminated when scholarships, uniforms, stationery, and other necessities were provided to children who were needy or could not receive a satisfactory education. YASD

began to provide elementary and middle school children supplementary lessons and a place to study after school. In addition, YASD established a platform to provide training on issues such as mental health, life skills, HIV/AIDS, and drug use and advice on starting a small business.

YASD started participating in the Homeless World Cup (HWC)⁴⁾ tournament in 2010. HWC is a street soccer tournament that has been held worldwide since 2003. The 2020 and 2021 competitions were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the 17th competition in Cardiff, Wales in 2019 featured more than 500 participants, with men from 44 countries and women from 16 countries. HWC is open to participants 16 years or older who have no previous tournament experience and (1) have experienced homelessness for at least three weeks within one year of the tournament date, or earn a living by selling newspapers on the street, (2) have received treatment for drug or alcohol abuse within the last two years, or (3) have been exiled or applied for asylum within the last 12 months. These individuals are not simply experiencing financial distress but are dealing with multiple issues, such as unemployment, criminal records, drug use, alcohol dependence, and mental illness. What constitutes homelessness differs between countries due to differences in legal systems, family structure, public support, and other factors. National partner organizations are responsible for registering participants in HWC, selecting players, preparing for the trip, sending participants off, providing support to participants after their arrival, and other measures. Although the makeup of these groups varies between countries, they share problems regarding poverty and homelessness in their countries. YASD is the national partner organization in Zimbabwe.



Photo3. The 2015 HWC Zimbabwe team



Photo 4. The 2018 HWC Zimbabwe team

2-2. Research methodology

The author visited the YASD offices in Harare from August 21st to August 31st, 2021. The author had planned to visit the office and conduct individual semi-structured interviews with 15 YASD coaches; however, the survey format was changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 15 coaches were asked to visit the YASD offices and respond to an online Google Forms questionnaire with the help of YASD staff. The questionnaire items were written in English and translated by the staff into the local language, Shona, when necessary. Responses were anonymous. The purpose of the survey and data confidentiality were explained to the

participants at the outset. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before completing the survey.

In addition, YASD representatives and staff were interviewed three times: (1) at the 2011 HWC convention (two people), (2) at the 2017 HWC convention (one person), and (3) at the 2018 HWC convention (two people). Furthermore, the author visited the Hatcliffe area in 2017 and conducted interview surveys with a total of 12 individuals, including players, their families, and alumni of the program. These surveys helped produce a deeper understanding of Zimbabwe's social conditions and sports, YASD's operations and relationships with public institutions, and other important matters. During this time, the author attempted to build rapport with the locals and, based on this, selected survey items in collaboration with the YASD staff. The survey was outsourced to YASD, with the results analyzed jointly by the YASD representative and the author.

3. Sports and development during COVID-19

3-1. SDP and the COVID-19 pandemic

There are various actors involved in SDP activities, including the UN, government agencies, nonprofit organizations (NPOs), NGOs, and private companies, and their scales and purpose of activities vary. For organizations operating in the field, the spread of COVID-19 not only restricted their activities but also blocked the flow of information, funds, and people, endangering the existence of these organizations. “Few countries were prepared for a pandemic, especially in the area of community sports and sports for development” (The Commonwealth, 2020).

Many SDP organizations used the networks they had cultivated to raise awareness of basic preventive measures and share knowledge on public health issues. In parallel with this effort, some groups distributed disinfectant, soap, masks, and other supplies and engaged in a campaign designed to prevent discrimination against individuals infected with COVID-19. The campaign disseminated messages, such as “Be Active”⁶⁾ (jointly issued by the UN, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Federation of International Football Associations) and “Be a Supporter of Each Other”⁷⁾ (issued by the European Football for Development Network), over the internet and social networks. In some countries, strict lockdowns and extended restrictions on human activity led to an increase in the number of people who experienced mental and physical issues. Moreover, as many SDP sites are in developing countries, quality of life in some locations declined significantly due to worsening economic conditions. Therefore, many organizations provide emergency assistance through existing networks, not always including sport.

The global COVID-19 pandemic stimulated discussion on what sports offer. Laureus, which is a global SDP foundation, established online communities on every continent to encourage

regular online meetings.⁸⁾ There are opportunities for communication between professionals, such as those in funding organizations, sports coaches, and researchers. Despite obstacles such as varying internet environments, time differences, and language, information exchanges have been actively conducted and issues uncovered. Furthermore, information on individual and group physical exercises, to be done at home, was compiled, and instructional materials, such as videos, have been actively distributed since April 2020 (Table 1).

Table 1. Materials for SDP and Sports-Based Youth Development (SBYD)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport Philanthropy Network (http://www.SportsPhilanthropyNetwork.com/Webinars) • Laureus Sport for Good Foundation (https://www.laureususa.com/laureus-virtual-training-camp) • Youth Sports Collaborative Network (http://www.youthsportscollaborative.org/covid-19-resources) • America SCORES (www.americascoreres.org) • Up2Us (https://www.up2us.org/up2ussportsathome) • Project Play / Aspen Institute (https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/coronavirus-and-youth-sports) • UpMetrics (https://app.upmetrics.com/signup) • Athletes For Hope (http://www.facebook.com/athletesforhope, http://www.athletesforhope.org) • Words of Hope / Fit at Home Videos (https://www.youtube.com/user/ATHLETESFORHOPE) • Online Physical Education Network (OPEN) (https://openphysed.org/activeschools/activehome) • Soccer Coaches Summit (https://soccersummit.coachesclinic.com/) • Beyond Sport (http://www.beyondsport.org/articles/beyond-sport-community-chats-how-can-we-help/) • Athletes For Computer Science (https://www.athletesforcomputerscience.org/afcslivecodingclass.html) • Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) (https://positivecoach.org/course-sign-up)
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Source: Sports and Social Change, “SDP Resources in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic.”

With the emergence of organizations that gather information and support online efforts, material content has changed. For instance, with the increased availability of vaccines in 2021, messages called for prioritizing vaccinations for healthcare workers and caregivers in cooperation with COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX), organized by the WHO. In addition, complaints were voiced regarding issues such as the crisis facing women in the form of domestic violence and unemployment and the plight of refugee camps forced to close.

On-site SDP activities were not likely to resume; however, international conventions were held online. The HWC held the “Keepy Uppy Cup,” where the winner was the one who demonstrated the best freestyle football tricks. The East Africa Cup⁹⁾ held an on-line event where 156 players and staff from 25 countries discussed the themes shown in Table 2.¹¹⁾

Some studies have evaluated SDP activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and discussed future activities in a post-COVID-19 world. Dayimani (2020) argued that the pandemic produced some positive effects, such as stronger family ties, reduced illicit drug use and progressed information networks, which could be called the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and fostered opportunities. Beacher (2020) noted indoor instead of outdoor family activities, exercising at home trends, inclusive sports, and free activities as key components. It is said that “in order to bounce back stronger after this crisis, we need to look at and confront discrimination inherent in sports based on body type, gender, sexuality, age, ability, caste, race, ethnicity, regional differences, religion and other factors”¹²⁾. In other words, as in other

sports fields, SDP in the post-COVID-19 era should be reconsidered, especially with regards to the significance of sports.

Table 2. Details of the East Africa Cup 2021

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Digital East Africa Cup 2020 Opening ceremony 2. Open networking Session 3. Child safeguarding & child rights 4. WASH Covid 19 - 5. Sexual and gender based violence 6. Sports for development 7. East Africa Cup podcast 8. Entrepreneurship 9. Stop poverty 10. Project Management 11. Communication, branding, marketing 12. Digital East Africa Cup 2020 closing ceremony |
|---|

Source: East Africa Cup, “East Africa Cup Media.”





The online events discussed above mention the effectiveness of grass roots efforts created through daily SDP activities. Even with domestic and international movements restricted, local SDP channels were sufficiently reliable and resilient to respond to emergencies when the organization was engaged in normal activities. Sport England launched the “Return to Play Fund” preceding the winter of 2022, arguing that local sports clubs should play an important role in maintaining people's athletic opportunities and health during winter.

However, such funding is uncommon. In a survey¹³⁾ of approximately 100 organizations worldwide by Oaks Consultancy, 60% of SDP organizations said that their income would decline in FY2020, with 46% of these indicating their income would continue to decline in FY2021. In addition, about one-third said that they were “not at all confident” or “not very confident” that their incomes would return to past levels after the pandemic. According to Paul Hunt of The International Platform on Sport and Development, an international hub in the SDP field, “Over the last 20 years, the number of organizations that utilize sports for social, economic and environmental goals has increased exponentially, with the SDP sector growing rapidly. However, the results of this report indicate the plight of the SDP sector, which is facing a crisis serious enough that progress made in the SDP field over the last century is in danger of disappearing.”¹⁴⁾

International Platform on Sport and Development launched the “Reshaping Sport and Development” campaign in September 2021 with four goals: (1) clarifying key themes and activities when transforming sports and development, (2) encouraging stronger community involvement in planning and prioritizing in the field, (3) upgrading to a better platform for all stakeholders, and (4) indicating a more comprehensive, accessible, and fair sports and development field. The group planned to publish articles by stakeholders, hold online events, create reports on key themes and activities, and engage in community consulting to build

cooperative relationships between stakeholders.¹⁵⁾ Stakeholders were shown the different levels of participation and accompanying benefits, with the goal of raising US\$200,000.

Table 3. Participation in the “Reshaping Sport and Development” campaign

	 Bronze	 Silver	 Gold	 Platinum
	\$3,000+	\$5,000+	\$10,000+	\$20,000+
Contribution				
Branding				
Your logo on the website	✓	✓	✓	✓
Your logo on the public report	✗	✓	✓	✓
Your logo on all campaign assets	✗	✗	✗	✓
Coverage				
Feature in the call for articles	✓	✓	✓	✓
Feature in the campaign report	✗	✗	✓	✓
Feature in the webinar	✗	✗	✗	✓
Website article profiling your work	✗	✗	✗	✓
Strategy				
Contribute to feedback surveys	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contribution to website design	✗	✗	✗	✓

Source: International Platform on Sport and Development

3-2. COVID-19 in Zimbabwe

There were 126,056 confirmed COVID-19 infections with 4,521 deaths in Zimbabwe as of September 10, 2021. As of the end of June 2021, 4,172,036 people had been vaccinated; however, as in neighboring South Africa, the number of newly infected individuals increased sharply from July to August 2021.

President Robert Mugabe, who had been dictator since independence in 1980, was ousted in 2017, and Emmerson Mnangagwa became president. However, “even after the change in government, the inflation rate was over 300% in August 2019 due to unstable exchange rates and a shortage of foreign currencies, with fuel, which is almost all imported, in especially short supply” (SAIIA, 2020). The International Monetary Fund forecasted Zimbabwe's economic growth rate for 2020 to be -10.4%, which, next to Seychelles and Mauritius, would be the lowest among the 45 sub-Saharan African countries.¹⁶⁾ Zimbabwe was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic during difficult economic conditions, with the government locking down the country twice, at the end of March 2020 and the beginning of January 2021. Measures such as the prohibition of gatherings (including restaurants and gyms but excluding funerals with up to 30 attendees), thorough enforcement of mask-wearing, hand-washing and social distancing, keeping hospitals, pharmacies, and supermarkets open but suspending all business activities except mining, manufacturing, and agriculture, prohibitions on interstate travel, prohibitions on going out from 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM, and school closures, all served to further weaken the domestic economy.

As of September 14, 2021, the average number of infections per day decreased to 4% from its peak on July 15.¹⁷⁾ It is widely thought that early approval of Ivermectin, a therapeutic drug for mildly ill patients, was one of the reasons for this improvement. As the number of new infections and deaths rapidly fell, there were calls to return to normal, including reopening businesses and schools.

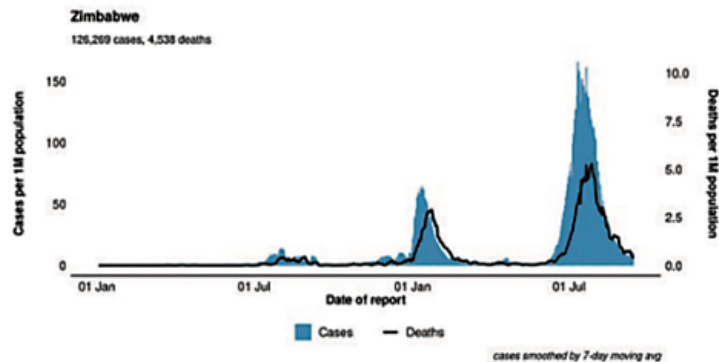


Figure 1. Infections and deaths per million residents in Zimbabwe

Source: WHO COVID-19 Dashboard

3-3. YASD activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

From 2020 to 2021, YASD activities were severely restricted, with members proactively communicating one-on-one and using social networks. In recent years, YASD activities have begun to target women, with efforts made to dispatch women's teams to HWC. YASD staff witnessed young women and girls, who already faced various hurdles during the COVID-19 pandemic, “losing power” (YASD, 2020). In the Hatcliffe area, young women spent more time doing household chores, such as looking for firewood and drawing water from community wells, with fewer opportunities to engage in self-enriching activities, which deprived them of income and opportunities for social interaction. Moreover, there were fewer opportunities to engage in activities outside the village, such as attending school and working, with the financial distress of households in which women had previously worked outside the home beginning to become especially pronounced. Recognizing the problems this created, YASD, with the support of Global FutureMakers,¹⁸⁾ and the Standard Chartered bank joined the GOAL project, which “focused on women's ability to break through new barriers and changing socio-economic conditions presented by COVID-19” (YASD, 2020). The project aimed to “help adolescent girls and young women gain confidence, knowledge, and life skills needed to become financial leaders in their families and communities” (YASD, 2020).

The GOAL project, which targets girls aged 12-18 years, was launched in 2006 with the cooperation of Global Future Makers and Women Win, an international NGO. By 2021, 480,000 people in 24 countries were engaged in GOAL project activities. GOAL aims to

combat social inequality in economically challenged communities, helping residents gain financial stability through sports, play, and life skills education.19) The program is a basic one-week course, or which can last up to ten months. The course consists of four modules: (1) Be healthy, (2) Be money savvy, (3) Be empowered, and (4) Be yourself (Photo 5). The implementing bodies and coaches of participating countries select the desired modules, mix-and-match them, and provide participants with hands-on learning opportunities.



Photo 5. The GOAL activity book

YASD coaches in Zimbabwe's GOAL project were mainly players who had once participated in YASD activities, local teachers, and women in community leadership-like positions. Before beginning activities, coaches underwent preliminary training on exercise guidance, life skills, counseling, and similar areas under the guidance of an outside expert.

The GOAL project aimed to create a place for women to talk about the challenges they face while engaging in recreational activities and light exercise. During COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, coaches attempted to prevent participants from becoming isolated by visiting their homes, conducting face-to-face interviews, and encouraging light exercises. As these visits were one-on-one, the number of participants that the coaches could visit at one time was far fewer than before the pandemic. However, this helped coaches witness changes in activities and participants and “build strong relationships with parents and guardians” (YASD, 2020).

4. Results

We conducted a questionnaire survey of 25 coaches working for the GOAL project. Questions consisted of six categories: (1) demographic information, such as age, gender, academic background, and work history, (2) experience playing sports (event, years played, level), (3) relationship with YASD (participation, motivation, thoughts), (4) activities at GOAL (frequency, number of participants supervised, activity description, personal interests), (5) sports and thoughts on youth in socially difficult situations, and (6) issues facing the

participants.

The 25 coaches consisted of eight teenagers, ten individuals 20-25 years old, five individuals 26-30 years old, one individual in the early 30s, and one individual over 36 years old. One participant was male, 23 were female, and one did not indicate gender. Twenty-one participants were high school students, four were college students, and 21 were high school graduates. Only one participant had regular work. Fourteen participants had played competitive soccer in junior high school, high school, and university. Some participants had hoped to join the national team, and others had served as captains of their teams.

In 2019, the Zimbabwean government released “Understanding Gender Equality in Zimbabwe: Women and Men in Zimbabwe Report,” which included the following analysis of conditions: “Women are being prevented from harnessing their political, economic and social potential and face gender-related challenges. Ultimately, they are more severely impacted by abuse and violence, which adversely affects their health and wellbeing. Women have less opportunity to engage in paid work, tending instead to engage in unpaid care work, and ultimately are expected to fulfill roles for which remuneration is not offered.” (National Statistics Agency, 2019)

COVID-19 began to spread shortly after discussions on gender issues began in Zimbabwe, and the situation for women deteriorated rather than improved, and this was not limited to Zimbabwe. Worldwide, women, particularly young women targeted by the GOAL project, have been the most severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the UN Women's Organization (UN Women) found that 243 million women and girls ages 15-49 worldwide had suffered sexual and/or physical violence inflicted by intimate partners in the last twelve months. “In cramped and closed living environments, this number will surely increase as safety, health and financial anxiety aggravate the tension and pressure in the home” (UN Women, 2020). In addition, falling income amongst non-regular employees, which are often single mothers and other women, is problematic worldwide. In Zimbabwe, poverty, isolation, and weakening of social ties due to under-education, under-employment, and suspension of work or school have become serious problems. GOAL project coaches commented on this.

Many households are unable to procure enough food for the entire family. I think it would be great if we could provide some food when we carry out GOAL project activities.

(Coach E, under 20, 1-3 three year of activity experience)

The number of children forced to work has increased since the pandemic began. Many children sell water and other items in the market, and there are also cases of sexual abuse because the children are in such a vulnerable position. Drug use is also on the rise, and many girls who become addicted begin to work in the sex trade.

(Coach M, 26-30, less than one year of activity experience)

Living in poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic, young women are sexually abused, and may become pregnant, get married, or be forced into the sex trade. Parents must gain an education and understand that children under the age of 16 are not responsible for their family's poverty. One of the problems is that getting married while still young has become a part of our culture and a custom.

(Coach N, 21-25, less than one year of activity experience)

In December 2020, the World Food Program (WFP) declared an emergency in Zimbabwe as prices of food showed a 700% inflation rate and provided food assistance to 4.1 million people, which is approximately a quarter of the country's population. This urgent declaration was based on a report examining challenges facing women during the COVID-19 pandemic, with an emphasis on food security issues.¹⁹⁾

In Hatcliffe, issues among adolescents, such as alcohol and drug dependence, unplanned pregnancies, marriage at a young age, abuse, and engagement in sex work, were noted even before the COVID-19 pandemic. A previous survey revealed issues of single mothers forced to become the breadwinners due to divorce or disappearance of the father and young women facing domestic violence or loss of freedom due to marrying too young or entering into polygamous relationships. Zimbabwe has a higher primary school enrollment rate than its neighboring countries, and educational disparity by gender is thought to be relatively small; however, the school enrollment rate for girls is low in secondary school and at higher education levels. The challenges facing young women and young mothers are inextricably linked, as marriage may force an abrupt discontinuance of education. Women's challenges, such as low income, low status within the home, and mental instability, have a direct impact on the living environment of local children. With the COVID-19 pandemic aggravating these problems, creating a vicious cycle and many other issues, the emphasis was on education and training to fight these.

Girls' education needs to receive more attention. Education is especially important in areas such as Hatcliffe, where girls are exposed to risks such as marrying too young.

(Coach A, 31-35, more than five years of activity experience)

When provided with an education, parents are not only better equipped to cope with the challenges they face but are also able to raise their children properly.

(Coach F, 26-30, more than five years of activity experience)

Having the knowledge needed to start a business, such as making and selling simple daily necessities, would be a great help in solving many of the problems that women face directly.

(Coach F, 21-25, 1-3 years of activity experience)

It has been noted that education and training are necessary for daily life and to secure a steady income. During the COVID-19 pandemic, focus was placed on community as the entity that provides opportunities for enlightenment, dialogue, and skill acquisition. With restriction placed on movement between regions, the importance of being exposed to individual challenges by neighbors and communities was recognized.

I think that any opportunity for girls to share concerns with other children and get to know their communities better is important.

(Coach L, 26-30, less than one year of activity experience)

The community should work with schools to provide adequate education for young people. Young people need help in developing decision-making skills to grow up in a healthier environment and choose better activities.

(Coach O, 21-25, less than one year of activity experience)

Presently, many young people in Hatcliffe lack work and entertainment opportunities, but the community can provide satisfaction and enjoyment through sports.

(Coach Q, 21-25, 1-3 years of activity experience)

Sports are utilized in YASD activities to maximize the functionality of the community. While restrictions on human activity were imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, relief from stress, talking about one's problems with others, eliminating time spent uselessly, creating a dependable presence, building relationships, problem-solving, creating motivation, and similar results were seen when subjects were given the opportunity to participate in sports and exercise (Petros, 2020). YASD coaches discussed specific cases.

Participating in a sport gives young people an opportunity to escape drugs, early pregnancy, and similar problems.

(Coach W, 21-25, 1-3 years of activity experience)

Sports bring about positive behavioral changes such as teamwork and improved self-esteem. Young people (participating in a sport) no longer hang out with others practicing bad habits, such as drinking, taking drugs, and prostitution, and are removed from an environment rife with slothfulness and moral weakness.

(Coach A, 31-35, over five years of activity experience)

Sport is a great way to really change a person's behavior. It also serves as a kind of mental therapy for those suffering from stress, producing a kind of inner peace.

(Coach M, 26-30, less than one year of activity experience)

While communities were forced to address social issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, YASD considers sports a means by which to break through the problems facing these communities and expects that participation in sports will reduce feelings of isolation and stress, create opportunities to commiserate with others, and create strength through interaction with others. "As just one example, in many countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, the burdens of home-schooling and childcare were placed squarely on the shoulders of women and girls, making it more difficult for them to participate in sports and other physical activity... Concerns about these inherent inequalities are also linked to threats to environmental sustainability and democracy, as well as local and global conflicts" (The Common Wealth, 2020). Sport is seen here as a way to express a desire for respect for diversity, interdependence, and sustainable development, not just as a way to interact with others and build relationships. Some YASD coaches also believed that sports can help build a better post-COVID-19 society.

Playing sports fosters confidence and helps create future leaders. This is also about leveraging the strength of the participants.

(Coach S, 21-25, more than five years of activity experience)

Sports serve to transform the community for the better. In playing a team sport, participants learn how to work with others irrespective of the environment they find themselves in.

(Coach Y, under 20, less than one year of activity experience)

Participation in the GOAL project does not guarantee quick resolution to the challenges faced by individual girls and women. Participation in SDP activities, especially for those who are financially distressed, may be questioned. However, if the federal or local government cannot provide relief for individuals dealing with personal difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic, this task falls to the local community, with the activities described above serving as a type of final safety net, especially in areas such as Hatcliffe that are beset with poverty. From the perspective of the women and girls thought to be disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the GOAL project proposes activities that are both realistic and attainable.

5. Conclusions

The GOAL project, which was conducted in an environment rife with restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, was based on qualities and attitudes, including dialogues, insights, and empathy, of the coaches. The coaches influenced the quality of activities. In addition, the coaches talked about changes that occurred in their own lives.

I have become much more social and am now comfortable talking over things with other people. This has also helped me become more confident.

(Coach K, 21-25, more than five years of activity experience)

Parents have on occasion approached me for advice. I am very proud that I can now provide something of value to the community.

(Coach Q, 21-25, 1-3 years of activity experience)

I now interact with players without judging them based on first impressions. I am now confident that I can work with anyone regardless of background.

(Coach Q, 26-30, less than one year of activity experience)

Some coaches said that they have grown, broadened their horizons, and changed their way of thinking; therefore, a worthwhile task for the future would involve taking a closer look at interactions arising out of relationships between coaches and participants and changes in how they approach issues.

The idea for this study was hatched in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fragile social and economic position in which African women found themselves was noted at that time, after which conditions steadily worsened in 2020-21 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, YASD had already set about building a network with an emphasis on women with the idea of launching businesses and was able to start the GOAL project while its other activities were severely restricted. For the women and girls of Hatcliffe, the GOAL project meant avoiding the isolation that can lead to life-threatening situations, and there is no doubt that it served as an opportunity for them to come together to consider how to best tackle community-wide challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, public health, youth marriage and pregnancies. The author plans to continue to monitor the GOAL project and YASD activities targeting women with an eye toward further examining the proliferation of YASD activities and philosophy, which aim to empower women with a focus on their position within the community.

Notes

- 1) The Japan Sports Agency provides an explanation of sports and SDGs in a FY2018 Administrative Project Review Sheet by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, titled “Sports SDGs Activity Promotion Project.”
- 2) YASD: <http://www.yasdzim.org/> (accessed on 09/23/2021).
- 3) Reported at a press conference by the Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe in 2005. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2005/tibaijukapc050722.doc.htm> (accessed on 09/23/2021).
- 4) HWC is a world street soccer tournament that has been held around the world annually since 2003. <https://www.homelessworldcup.org/> (accessed on 09/23/2021).
- 5) The Commonwealth is an economic union of over 50 countries, which is almost all the former territories of the British Empire.
- 6) FIFA “Be Active”: <https://www.fifa.com/news/beactive-an-expert-on-the-importance-of-exercise> (accessed on 09/23/2021).
- 7) European Football for Development Network: <https://www.efdn.org/> (accessed on 09/23/2021).
- 8) Laureus: <https://www.laureus.com/sport-for-good/covid-19-support> (accessed on 09/23/2021).
- 9) The East Africa Cup is featured on the International Platform on Sport and Development. <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/event/east-africa-cup-2021> (accessed on 09/23/2021).
- 10) Homeless World Cup, Keepy Uppy Cup: <https://homelessworldcup.org/hwkuc> (accessed on 09/10/2021).
- 11) East Africa Cup online event: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsvd4041FRpS0iklqU3ZYqWhg3wovw49n> (accessed on 09/10/2021).
- 12) Madhumita Das and Sanjana Gaiind, “The future of sport and development: Building a more equitable and inclusive sector” (June 24, 2020). *Sports and Development*. <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/article/news/future-sport-and-development-building-more-equitable-and-inclusive-sector> (accessed on 09/30/2021).
- 13) The survey was conducted with the assistance of three organizations: Laureus Sport for Good, The International Platform on Sport and Development, and streetfootballworld.
- 14) “Study reveals COVID could be final whistle for fifth of sport for development sector” (January 25, 2021). *Sport and Development*. <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/article/news/study-reveals-covid-could-be-final-whistle-fifth-sport-development-sector> (accessed on 09/04/2021).
- 15) “Campaign: Reshaping Sport and Development” (September 9, 2021). *Sport and Development*. <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/article/news/reshaping-sport-and-development> (accessed on 09/13/2021).
- 16) In Zimbabwe, the US dollar has long been the market currency; however, in June 2019, it was announced that the RTGS dollar (bond note) would be the sole legal tender. As the RTGS dollar continues to lose its value and the inflation rate continues to rise, many want to hold US dollars,

leading to a shortage of domestic foreign currency.

- 17) Excerpt from Reuters COVID-19 Trackers: <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/ja/countries-and-territories/zimbabwe/> (accessed on 09/10/2021).
- 18) FutureMakers and Standard Chartered Bank address inequality by promoting economic inclusion in the marketplace, especially for disadvantaged young people, particularly girls and the visually impaired. Participants learn new skills and are provided with employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. <https://www.sc.com/en/sustainability/investing-in-communities/futuremakers/> (accessed on 09/09/2021).
- 19) Women Win: <https://www.womenwin.org/grls/programmes/goal/> (accessed on 09/20/2021).
- 20) WFP: <https://www.wfpusa.org/articles/zimbabwe-hunger-coronavirus-women-girls/> (accessed on 09/21/2021).

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Mr. Petros Chatiza and staff members of YASD for their great support and cooperation for the implementation of this study. This study has been funded by the JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research 20H04076.

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