



Review of international sport development initiatives linked to UK Sport's major events bids

Executive Summary
September 2017



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Introduction

UK Sport has long-standing experience of engaging in sport projects, exchanges and relationships with national sport agencies, governments and relevant bodies worldwide. This review focuses on international sport development initiatives linked to UK Sport's major event bids, as relatively little is known about the extent to which these types of programmes can influence International Federations (IFs), National Federations (NFs) and Continental Federations (CFs) and help to strengthen a National Governing Body's (NGB's) bid to host a major sporting event in the UK.

The research involved a series of in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with representatives from a range of IFs, NGBs, NFs and CFs to provide insights into the perceived value and contribution of international development initiatives as well as the potential scope and future opportunities for UK Sport in this area.

The value of international development initiatives

The main rationale for inclusion in the bid is to strengthen a NGB's bid to host a major sporting event in the UK. NGBs valued international development initiatives as it can help them to further their own development aims around its influence and relationship with the IF through working in closer partnerships.

Moreover, IFs recognised the importance of such international development initiatives in helping them to achieve their strategic objectives, and saw the added value of such initiatives being tied to a major event. Overall, the main advantage of linking an international development initiative to an event was to raise awareness and promote a sport in a positive way. It was also regarded as an effective means for inspiring coaches and players as gives them a goal to work towards and the event can also be a powerful way of spreading the word about the programme.

Nevertheless, it was difficult to conclude how important the international development component was in terms of the actual bidding outcome. There was, however, a broad consensus that sustainable international development is becoming more important and attaching such initiatives to major events can be an effective mechanism for delivery.

Programme design and delivery

The scope of activities on offer as part of the international development programmes is broad and varied depending on IFs. However, there are a range of contextual factors that shaped nature and scale of activities which are linked to the IFs priorities and UK Sport's / NGB's expertise. The majority of international development programmes centred on capacity building, participation and governance. It was also clear that some of the international development programmes equally had a strong focus relationship building and influence. Often international development programmes built on previous IPP activities or alongside initiatives that were supported by other nations or agencies.

When deciding on the country selection for the international development programme, IFs need to take an active role in the selection process of countries, to ensure that there is a good alignment with the IF's international development objectives. NGBs and UK Sport should also contribute and feed in views on the suitability of the countries for the programme based on their own experience of working in the selected countries.

A number of key lessons were noted about the design and the delivery of the programme. The main lessons included the importance of having an extended scoping phase, setting clear goals, having the right people together, tailoring systems and approaches, and creating a sustainable legacy.

Outcomes for different partners

International development programmes have generated positive outcomes in terms of increased influenced on IF's approaches to their development, which has in some instances contributed to related work by the IF.

It has also generated a wider positive effect on international relations due to engagement work which has been undertaken with both IFs and NFs involved. Anecdotal evidence from the interviews supports the view that international development programmes linked to major events have improved the UK's visibility internationally, and help to strengthen its reputation amongst the international sporting community, and the NFs and CFs that are involved.

There have also been positive outcomes for the participating NF in terms of developing capacity of coaches and players, increasing participation and strengthening governance. There has also been the opportunity to engage and/or work with other partners with an interest in developing the sport. In particular, there was already recognition from some of the NFs and partner organisations who took part in interviews that the international development programmes are likely to generate longer-term impacts if activities are sustained.

Scanning for future opportunities

Overall, there was a perception that UK Sport's current support was quite unique in terms of offering a complete and holistic package of support, from high performance, coaching, equipment, teacher training, to governance and management support. Whereas support from other nations tended to be focused on a single element, for example upskilling coaches or high-performance training for the national team.

Currently the UK is well positioned in the sports in focus for this study as the sports have strong NGBs in global terms as well as an abundance of expertise in terms of governance and coaching provision. While the UK currently maintains a strong position in the context of hosting international sports events, the opportunity to host a major sport events is increasingly competitive, not only from well-established host nations, but also from emerging host nations.

Key findings and lessons for future bids

Key findings and lessons from the review are summarised below:

- Development projects were highly valued by the IFs, as they were either in line with IF strategic priorities for international sport development, or were 'ahead of the game' and helping to shape IF's strategic priorities in this area.
- The approach used within the programme design and delivery was widely regarded as effective. There was also evidence of innovative practices taking place and new approaches introduced are successfully integrated within existing structures of partner countries.
- Based on the views of the NFs, programmes have achieved some positive outcomes, especially in terms of capacity, participation and governance. NFs also valued the benefits that the international partnership with the NGB and UK Sport brings to the programme, in terms of the expertise, approach, and opportunities to learn from and share knowledge with other countries.

- Interviewees were able to highlight examples where NGBs have influenced IFs on approaches to their development, and had contributed to related work by the IF. There is clear evidence to suggest that the international development programmes have created better relationships and understanding between federations.
- There are three key areas to enhance the programme bid and impact, which are improving awareness of UK Sport's international development initiatives, supporting IFs to demonstrate and measure the impact of their programmes, and supporting NGBs with their international development programmes.
- It was clear that there are other nations that are also developing their offer and that international development is becoming an increasing priority for IFs. The UK is currently well positioned, but to stay ahead of other nations it's crucial for that learning from international development programmes is captured and reflected, so that innovative approaches can be presented at the bidding stage for future events.
- The research that has been undertaken for this review has highlighted an additional area on which further research would be beneficial. This includes further consultation with the government on the selection of countries for the international development projects linked to major events to ensure there is an alignment with Her Majesty's Government (HMG's) foreign policy, development and sport policy objectives.