

# **Sport as a Strategic Tool for Deploying Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in Zimbabwe**

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## **Abstract**

The article argues that in spite of the progress made in the field of Sport for Development and Peace, and evidence supporting the claims about benefits of sport in peacebuilding, much work remains to be done for sport to be used more broadly in this sector by sport and non-sport actors alike. In support of its argument, the article analyses the conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts in Zimbabwe, where a series of sport-based programmes delivered by both state and non-state level actors aimed to reduce violence, enable positive youth development, and instil peace. Following the analysis of these activities, the article reinforces three foundational premises using which all sport-specific programming for purpose of building peace should be based on.

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**DEVELOPMENT, ZIMBABWE, SPORT, UNITY  
ACCORDS, PEACE**

Despite all this progress, we strongly feel that framing sport as a strategic tool for peacebuilding and to support the positive development of post-conflict situations remains a task to be fully accomplished. In fact, if we want our efforts of framing and using sport as a viable peacebuilding tool to be successful in the long run, it is paramount that we engage in systematically exploring answers and gathering evidence with view to mainly three closely connected questions. These questions are: **first**, what are the main challenges in peacebuilding and post-conflict situations? **Second**, why and how can sport help in those situations, meaning, which are the main features and mechanisms of sport that can contribute to promoting peace and positive social transformation in post-conflict situations? **Third**, what are preconditions of success of sports-based peace interventions, and how do we honestly measure success (Cárdenas and Lang, 2016)?

### **Introduction**

Sport has been defined differently by various authorities. The European Sports Charter (Council of Europe, 2001), defined sport as “means of all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels”.

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The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, 2003) presented a definition of sport as “all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games”. From the definitions presented above, sport presents several benefits to participants and communities alike. Sport contributes to team building. It also contributes to mental health as it offers an avenue for releasing tension and to overcome difficulties through sharing and exercise.

Sport appeals to the different levels of peacebuilding, as articulated by the Institute for Multi-track Diplomacy (Institute For Multi-Track Diplomacy, n.d.). Sport can influence peacebuilding at the political level to promote and encourage diplomatic engagement among adversaries. One of the most talked about strategies for ensuring peace is the use of sport for peacebuilding purposes (Cárdenas and Lang, 2016). It has been hailed as a pragmatic and strategic vehicle for peacebuilding in post-conflict societies. Yet the conceptual lines remain unclear. Each community, region, country, or international community experience conflict in different ways. Zimbabwe’s conflict over the past few decades is mostly political with the youths taking a prominent role. The polarization in Zimbabwe is mostly driven by racial, ethnic, and political party polarization, which goes back to the colonial era (Muchemwa, 2015). This chapter will explore various questions relating to sport and peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. Specifically, the chapter engaged with the questions; what is the nature of conflict in Zimbabwe? Which sporting disciplines/activities are best suited for peacebuilding initiatives in Zimbabwe? What are the challenges and opportunities for developing sport as a vehicle for peacebuilding? The purpose of this chapter is to make both a scientific and practical contribution to peacebuilding and development.

### **Brief History of Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa known for its dramatic landscape and diverse wildlife, much of it within parks, reserves, and safari areas. The name

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Zimbabwe is derived from the Shona, *dzimba dzemabwe*, meaning houses of stone or stone buildings, today symbolized by the Great Zimbabwe Ruins near the present-day town of Masvingo. Zimbabwe has a rich history, of not only achievement, innovation, cooperation, and economic prosperity, but also of conflict, trials, and tribulations that reflects the dynamism of its peoples. Pre-colonial Zimbabwe was a multi-ethnic society inhabited by the Shangni/Tsonga in the south-eastern parts of the Zimbabwe plateau, the Venda in the south, the Tonga in the north, the Kalanga and Ndebele in the south-west, the Karanga in the southern parts of the plateau, the Zezuru and Korekore in the northern and central parts, and finally, the Manyika and Ndau in the east. Scholars have tended to lump these various groups into two huge ethnic blocs, namely 'Ndebele' and 'Shona' largely because of their broadly similar languages, beliefs, and institutions. (The term Shona itself is, however, an anachronism as it did not exist until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was coined by enemies as an insult; it conflates linguistic, cultural, and political attributes of ethnically related people). The political, social, and economic relations of these groups were complex, dynamic, fluid, and always changing. They were characterized by both conflict and cooperation.

From the 1880s to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a coalescence of Christianity, mercantilism, colonialism, and capitalism gradually displaced the pre-colonial socio-political and economic formations discussed above, bringing about a colonial transformation marked by the emergence of new identities, commodities, languages, and ideologies, as well as new political and economic frameworks. One significant characteristic of early colonial rule in Zimbabwe was land dispossession and forcible proletarianization of the Africans. And the key aim of settler manufacturing/production was maximum output premised on minimum cost. This had to be achieved through the restricting African access to land, thus undercutting African peasant agricultural production, increasing taxation, as well as forcing Africans to sell their labour cheaply to white mine owners and farmers. Paying the African starvation wages augmented all these exploitative measures. These machinations were legally supported by such oppressive and exploitative legislation as the Masters and Servants Ordinance, the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau, the Pass Laws, the Native Regulations Ordinance, and the

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compound system that gave mine owners semi-‘feudal’ powers akin to those of slave owners of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We therefore note that in the 1920s and 1930s, the state increasingly intervened on behalf of the settlers against the interests of the Africans.

The impact of these policies continued after the nation liberated itself and formally took on the name Zimbabwe. Since independence, the nation has continuously experienced intermittent conflicts that often exhibit forms of direct, structural, and cultural violence. One reason for these conflicts is political party-based polarization, which occurs when party members defect to form other parties, e.g., formation of ZANU PF from ZAPU in the 1960s; e.g., formation of MDC into MDC T, MDC-M in 2005 and more recently MDC-Alliance and MDC-T. It can be noted that polarization in Zimbabwe is most severe in the rural areas and is mostly driven by political elites, and to an extent, funding partners, popularly referred to as donors (McCandless, 2011).

The late political scientist, John Makumbe, also submitted that traditional chiefs play a significant role in sustaining political polarization in rural areas and that they have often acted in favour of the ruling ZANU PF party. Although there have been significant efforts to address conflicts through official state actions, the quest for sustainable peace has remained elusive. Notable initiatives include the Unity Accord of 1987, the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation, and Integration (ONHRI) which was operational during the Global Political Agreement from 2009-2013, and in recent years, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC). However, the level of political polarization and hatred among identifiable political groups in the country is frightening. Conflicts in Zimbabwe are particularly pronounced during election times, particularly the year 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, and 2018 plebiscites, where lives were lost owing to political electoral violence. Zimbabwe’s performance on the Global Peace Index (GPI) (Visions of Humanity, 2019) which is conducted on an annual basis by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) (Institute for Economics and Peace, n.d.) show that the country’s social, political, and economic environment remains fragile. In fact, the country’s performance has been poor with Zimbabwe ranking low compared to other countries in the region and beyond.

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The situation of the youth is particularly disturbing. Youth form the majority of the population. Similar to other African countries, Zimbabwe has a higher number of youths on its population pyramid. The African continent has been aptly described as a growing population owing to its youthful population (The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of United Nations Secretariat (UNDESA), 2008). The African Institute for Development Policy (African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), 2015) indicated that the African Youth Population stands at around 60% of the total population. (CODESRIA 2018 Democratic Governance Institute, 2018). The 2012 census results in Zimbabwe showed that the combined population of youth and children is around 77 per cent of Zimbabwe's approximately 13 million people (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, n.d.). The African Economic Outlook (African Development Bank, 2019) and Africa Renewal Reports (Africa Renewal, 2019) underlined the dire state of affairs when it comes to issues of youth empowerment on the continent. And in recent years, drug abuse has also emerged as a serious challenge to the youth in the country, and thus raising questions of how best the country can respond to these developmental questions from a peacebuilding perspective. While the country is not at war or experiencing a civil war, the country's long history of unresolved conflicts (from pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial contexts) calls for innovative and relevant intervention strategies for constructing workable and sustainable peace processes that will secure the future of Zimbabwe's youth.

### **Conceptualizing Sport, Conflict, Violence, and Peace**

Peacebuilding practice is a discourse that has continued to evolve. It is a discourse credited to the pioneering work of Galtung who first coined the term peacebuilding, (Galtung, 1975) and later in the post-Cold War dispensation when former United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Ghali, published the report "Agenda for Peace" (Ghali, 1992). The report was later consolidated and published as a book under UN

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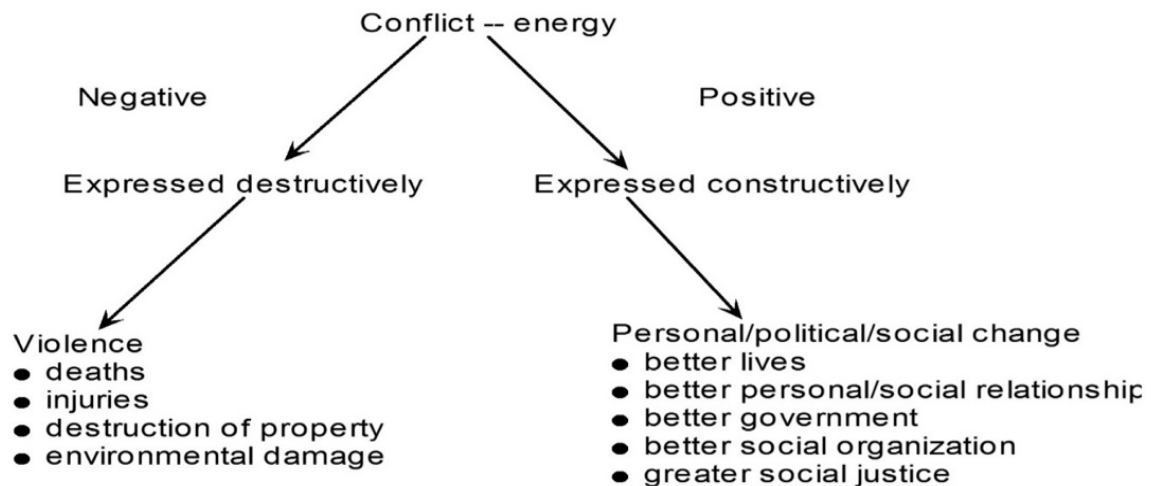
publications. Here, peacebuilding was taken to mean the long term efforts to transform situations of conflict and violence into positive peace. Another UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, later contributed to the discourse when he submitted that peacebuilding is sustained, cooperative work on underlying economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems (press.un.org, 2001).

According to Makwerere and Mandoga (Makwerere and Mandoga, 2012), peacebuilding goes beyond the emphasis on state security and nation building to emphasise human security. Schirch cited in Makwerere concluded that “there is a close relationship between peacebuilding and human security, whereas peacebuilding initiatives aim at providing sustainable solutions to both immediate and structural sources of fear and want, human security on the other hand requires a citizen-oriented state, an active civil society as well as a robust business sector so as to ensure a secure environment for every individual in the community” (Schirch, 2013). As John Paul Lederach has noted, a major strategy in peacebuilding is conflict transformation. He stated, “Conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting. This involves a new set of lenses through which we do not primarily, see ‘the setting and the people in it as ‘the problem’ and the outsider as the ‘answer’. Rather we understand the long-term goal of transformation as validating and building on people and resources within the setting” (John Paul Lederach, 1995).

We argue that sport can be one tool to resolve conflict and reduce violence to secure a better future for Zimbabwe’s youth. One of the organizations that seeks to actively promote sport as a vehicle for socio-economic transformation, Right To Play, stated that sport “possesses unique attributes that enable it to contribute to development and peace processes. Sport’s universal popularity, its capacity as one of the most powerful global communications platforms, and its profound ability to connect people and to build their capacities make it one of the most crosscutting of all development and peace tools. These attributes also make sport an effective, low-cost means of preventing and addressing a broad range of social and economic challenges” (Right To Play (RTP),

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2007). The whole idea in exploring the transformative benefits of sport in the context of conflicts is to transform such conflict into more constructive and productive non-destructive outcomes, as the chart below indicates:



**Figure 1: Transformative benefits of sport and non-destructive outcomes (authors, 2023)**

Within any conflict, there are basically three forms of violence, *direct violence* (physical, emotional, verbal abuse), *structural violence* (policies that favour one or more groups at the expense of others, use of state apparatus to disadvantage other groups), and *cultural violence* (cultural traditions and practices that violate the rights and dignity of other members within that cultural set up, e.g., gender discrimination). This framework can be expanded through including the insights of Johan Vincent Galtung, who found out that violence can be direct or indirect. Galtung explained that, “We shall refer to the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as personal or direct, and to violence where there is no such actor as structural or indirect. In both cases individuals may be killed or mutilated, hit or hurt in both senses of these words (i.e., physical and psychological), and manipulated by means of stick and carrot strategies (Galtung, 1969).

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Finally, the World Health Organisation [WHO] defined violence as, “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation. (World Health Organization (WHO), 2002).

This last definition makes an attempt to cover the micro-level as well as the macro-level manifestations of violence. It also covers the public and private nature of violence. WHO further divides violence into three categories: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence, collective violence (World Health Organization (WHO), 2002). The first category relates to self-inflicted violence. This includes self-abuse through drug and alcohol abuse, as well as suicide or para-suicide (attempted suicide). The second category of inter-personal violence is in relationship to smaller group dynamics. This can be one person inflicting pain on another person. This can be at a family level, workplace, or even within a religious or cultural group. The groups are relatively small and do not qualify as a community. What is thus particularly encouraging is the fact that sport has the potential to appeal to the different dimensions and levels of violence to promote peace.

We align ourselves with John Paul Lederach, who, in “The Moral Imagination,” stressed the transformative potential of culture in peacebuilding and transformation. He observed for peacebuilding to be necessary, there was a need to be creative and to combine formal and artistic strategies, including the use of sport to navigate the complexities of building sustainable peace. According to Lederach (John Paul Lederach, 2005), peacebuilding is complex, and the goal of transcending violence is advanced by the capacity to generate, mobilize, and build the moral imagination. This imaginative faculty rests on four capacities:

1. Moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships, one that includes even our enemies.
  2. It requires the ability to embrace complexity without getting caught up in social schism.
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3. It requires a commitment to the creative act.
4. It requires an acceptance of the risk that necessarily goes along with attempts to transcend violence (John Paul Lederach, 2005).

That is, peacebuilding requires a better understanding of the dynamic nature of the presenting conflict, its causes and drivers, as well as its actors. Sport by nature is very competitive, if not aggressive, and its use in peacebuilding initiatives must be handled with due care, because there is always the potential of the games re-igniting the conflict – and yet the idea would be to transform the conflict through sport as part of the moral imagination. Therefore, it requires a delicate balancing act of ensuring popular and inclusive participation whilst avoiding stocking the fires of conflict and making the situation worse for the targeted group. In most cases, conflicts exhibit attitudes that paint an ‘us versus them’ mentality and if not carefully managed, any team sport can actually reinforce this, albeit inadvertently.

Although in his presentation of the moral imagination Lederach emphasised artistic power of music and other creative arts, we want to argue for the various sporting disciplines, particularly those that are team sporting activities, as being part of the creative art and the moral imagination for transforming volatile relationships into healthier ones. In this regard, Lederach submitted that "the perspective of meditative capacity focuses attention on introducing a quality of interaction into a strategic set of social spaces within the web of systemic relationships in order to promote constructive change processes in the conflict-affected setting as a whole" (John Paul Lederach, 2005). In this regard, the social spaces of interest are those that are created by various sporting activities that include football (by far the most popular sport in Zimbabwe), handball, netball, rugby, cricket, basketball, tennis, and various other sporting disciplines that are practiced in Zimbabwe.

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### **Sport and Social Inclusion in Conflict Resolution and Transformation**

A major contribution brought by sport is its ability to nurture socially inclusive processes. Most sporting disciplines transcend racial, ethnic, economic, and political divides. Sport has the ability to bring together people and communities with diverse and often conflicting backgrounds. According to Silver (Silver, 2015), social inclusion is defined as a process encouraging social interaction between people with different socially relevant attributes or an impersonal institutional mechanism of opening up access to participation in all spheres of social life. Social inclusion is affirmative action to change the circumstances and habits that lead to or have led to social exclusion. The World Bank defines social inclusion as the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society (The World Bank, 2013). According to Allman (Allman, 2013), the terms social inclusion and social exclusion have been used throughout the social science and humanities literature in a number of different ways—to describe acts of social stratification across human and animal societies, as a principle to reflect the ordering that occurs within societies to determine social position, and as a narrative to explain, and at times justify, why one or more groups merit access to the core or the periphery, to the benefit or expense of others. Other scholars like Eitzen (Eitzen, 1973) and Baxter (Baxter, 2014) agree with the above assertion, although they looked at social exclusion through the sociological lenses. A complementary analytical lens derived from Johan Vincent Galtung's Resolution, Reconciliation and Reconstruction model, the "3Rs" model (Galtung, 1998). The model places emphasis on the importance of resolution of differences in constructive ways. It also underlines the importance of social reconstruction as the basis for long-term and durable peace among and within individuals and communities in general. Social reconciliation is about (re)building relationships and promoting positive co-existence at different levels of society. This is usually bound on fairness, equality, and respect.

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Most sporting disciplines preach these “inclusive” values, and they are, thus, useful for sustainable peacebuilding. For example, the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) values are listed as :

- Transparency: is operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.
- Accountability: is the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for actions.
- Integrity: is regarded as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one’s actions. Integrity can stand in opposition to hypocrisy.
- Solidarity: is a unity of purpose or togetherness.
- Courage: is the choice and willingness to confront agony, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation.
- Justice: as found in the study and application of the law.
- Democracy: the rule of the majority (Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA), 2019).

The more inclusive International Olympics Committee (IOC) express similar values of other sporting disciplines. According to the IOC, the original values of Olympism as expressed in the Olympic Charter were to “encourage effort”, “preserve human dignity”, and “develop harmony”. Over time, they have evolved and are now expressed in more contemporary terms as:

- Striving for excellence and encouraging people to be the best they can be.
- Celebrating friendship, which is quite unique to the Olympic Games – an event that brings people together every few years.
- Demonstrating respect in many different manners: respect towards yourself, the rules, your opponents, the environment, the public, etc.

It can be argued, then, that all sporting disciplines generally preach the virtues of respect, fairness, friendship, and harmony, themes that resonate with Galtung’s “3R”

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model. The IOC stated that, “Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will, and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example, and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles. The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity, and fair play (International Olympic Committee, 2021). From the foregoing, it can be argued that sport provides greater value and relevance to peacebuilding. Sport provides a platform for resolution, reconciliation, and reconstruction in many creative ways.

Kelly asserts that, social inclusion through sports participation is considered by government bodies and sports scholars globally as an important part of the inclusion process within the wider society (Cole and Kelly, 2015). The notion of social inclusion is reinforced by the values of fairness, equity, and social justice. The premise of an inclusive society is built on the concept of inclusion, the idea being that in an ‘inclusive society’, individuals will be able to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life of a nation and achieve their full potential (Lister, 2010, pp.143–164). According to Parnell and Richardson (Parnell and Richardson, 2014), sport’s potential to contribute positively to a range of social issues is widely celebrated. Research by Coalter (Coalter, 2007) argues about the underpinning notion being that the participation in sport can support social inclusion that is reduce crime, develop communities and improve health.

Some scholars have also linked the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the fight against social exclusion. According to Silver (Silver, 2015), the emphasis on inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) compels us to specify what social inclusion is and how to accomplish it. The Open Working Group’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals 8, 10, 11, and 16 all refer to inclusion. Goal 8 is to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable growth with employment creation; Goal

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10 to “empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status”; Goal 11 is to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable”; and Goal 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies as well as inclusive institutions. Sport can help improve communication and cement existing ties between individuals and groups from different and potentially conflictual backgrounds (Snyder and Spreitzer, 1983).

Zimbabwe sports also reflect these beliefs about sport. The Zimbabwe Aquatic Union in its code of conduct highlights essential elements of character building and ethics in sports are embodied in the concept of sportsmanship and six core principles: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship. The highest potential of sports is achieved when competition reflects these "six pillars of character". The Sport and Recreation Commission confirms that sport has always been an integral part in the country's quest for nation building and development as enshrined in various sport codes. The Zimbabwe Handball Federation code of conduct states that “within the framework of the association, the belief that all humans are born equal irrespective of race, creed, colour, or nationality shall be preserved forever. It is the intent of this body to preserve and advance these principles... by joining the nations and continents of the world by... usage of... sport designed to challenge individual skills while creating a better understanding. Further, this body recognises the sovereignty of each nation to administer such programmes as it deems necessary and desirable for the benefit of handball within the nation and the world”.

In Zimbabwe, the challenge is to reconstruct the narrative and the agency of the youth in conflict dynamics. In most cases, the youth have been used or deployed as the merchants of violence and as foot soldiers unleashing violence on perceived political opponents on behalf of their political principals. The violence has taken both inter and intra-party dimensions with others fighting amongst themselves and others against other members from other political parties. We also found out that sport has been used by different actors, namely the state, business and Non-Governmental Organisations,

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to promote peace at different levels in society. Examples include the Independence and Unity Day football tournaments, the School Sports Games, the Youth Empowerment through Sport (YES) programme, and various “sport for peace” tournaments that have been organised by NGOs in different parts of the country. Yet, sport, football in particular, regardless of the background in which it takes place, cannot be isolated from the rest of the society. We explore the ability of sports to create social inclusion in the context of Zimbabwe below.

### **Zimbabwe State-level Sport for Peacebuilding Initiatives**

At the state level, state authorities have sought to use sport, particularly football, as a nation building tool. Examples given were the Independence Cup football tournament which is played to commemorate the country’s independence every year. Although this has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, it was noted that the Independence Cup has always been synonymous with the country’s independence celebrations and that it helped to magnify the importance of the country’s hard-won independence across generations, from the elderly to the young. The Independence Cup was usually contested for by teams in the country’s top-flight football league. In fact, it started off as a tournament for the top four teams (per the previous season’s log standings), but it later changed to be a preserve of the country’s top two football teams (based on following), i.e., Dynamos and Highlanders. This reduction is an issue that raised concerns about inclusivity of the tournament and relevance to peacebuilding initiatives. Apart from the Independence Cup, the study also found out that in the past, the country used to celebrate continental integration through the hosting of what was then known as the Africa Day Cup. This was again a football tournament meant to celebrate the importance of a united Africa that is actively seeking to see a fully integrated continent for the good of the continent’s citizens. Unfortunately, although this was a popular tournament, it was abandoned a long time ago owing to funding challenges.

Another football tournament that showed the country’s intention to use sport as a vehicle for peacebuilding was the Unity Day Cup that was played to commemorate the

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Unity Accord that was signed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1987 between the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). The Unity Accord birthed what is now known as the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), currently ruling party in the country. The tournament initially enjoyed the funding of the state, and it is unclear why the tournament was abandoned altogether. The Unity Day Cup tournaments were also extended to provinces and districts. However, these lacked proper technical and practitioner input to allow for monitoring and evaluation of their impact to wider peacebuilding. The initiatives on Unity Cup also failed to yield its results due to football club executives releasing the clubs for the festive season so it would be not necessary for them to take part in the tournament. As a result, organizers had to try and find other teams to participate to no avail. In 2015, the tournament could not take place due to the burial of a National Hero, hence bringing confusion to the participating teams.

These state-led efforts demonstrate that while sports have the ability to achieve a new moral imagination, this potential is dependent on outside actors not corrupting sports with their own agenda. This is common, however, with politicians who use sport events to garner support from the electorate. If the State does not alter its behaviour, then a sporting event will not be seen as neutral or without an agenda. As such it will not accomplish its purpose of fostering unity amongst people. As such, sports might actually be seen as giving a lever to reform such non-sport organizations behaviour towards these conflicts.

### **Zimbabwe State and Non-state Partnerships in Sport for Peacebuilding**

Several initiatives, particularly in primary and secondary schools can also be attributed to directly and indirectly contributing to the peacebuilding agenda in the country. These are mostly organized team sports in schools that are funded by business partners. A flagship tournament remains the Coca-Cola Schools Soccer Tournament. This targets

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mostly those under the age of 17. Other partners have funded junior tournaments in primary schools. Apart from this, another equally popular tournament is the COTCO Schools Rugby Festival, while other corporates have also supported football including Dairiboard.

The country has also benefitted from the Youth Education through Sport (YES) program. The program started in 1999 and is stirred by the Community Sport Development Program. The initiative started in Harare around 1999 and was later rolled out to other parts of the country. The main purpose of the initiative was to teach the youth about social responsibility whilst enjoying the benefits of sport. It was meant to tackle the ravaging effects of HIV/AIDS and other social challenges that then affected society. In contemporary times, it has been used to address the challenges relating to youth drug abuse. The program has a presence at national, provincial, district, and ward levels in all parts of the country and thus contributing significantly to social cohesion. The Sports and Recreation Commission (SRC), which was created by an act of parliament in Zimbabwe, plays a very significant role in coordinating the activities.

Although it is difficult to directly link these school-based sporting activities to peacebuilding, the benefits brought about by merely participating in these tournaments are immense and they go a long way in contributing to the well-being of the nation. A research project (Borsani, 2009) has confirmed that participating in sport nurtures values of cooperation, teamwork, emotional resilience, respect, fairness, problem solving, tolerance, discipline, etc., among many other advantages of sport. Indeed, the constituency of social cohesion is complex, but at its essence, social cohesion implies a convergence across groups in society that provides a framework within which groups can, at a minimum, coexist peacefully. In this way, social cohesion offers a measure of predictability to interactions across people and groups, which in turn provides incentives for collective action (The World Bank, 2013). Social cohesion can in a positive sense stand for the elements of social progress which include human security, an absence of the threat of violence or coercive force, and solidarity. As such it can be

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seen as both constitutive to development, and instrumental to other elements of development, for example, the ability of social groups to sustainably improve living standards, thereby nation building.

Several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have also contributed to peacebuilding in Zimbabwe through sporting initiatives. Some of the NGOs that have led the way in promoting peacebuilding through sport include the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), Heal Zimbabwe, Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT), Generations For Peace (GFP), and several other entities. Most of these organizations have implemented sport for peace tournaments in different parts of the country. However, these initiatives have been accused of lacking both peacebuilding acumen as well as continuity. Thus, making it difficult to measure the program's impact, success, or lack thereof.

The above school and NGO efforts demonstrate the breadth of assistance including conflict prevention, mediation, peace support, and post-conflict reconstruction as vehicles for peacebuilding, which makes Zimbabwe's approach to this assistance comprehensive. The modalities for delivery of this assistance are clearly distinct from established actors in this field, as they do not feel obliged to push the ideology of human rights and democracy in their assistance. As a result, its pre-conditions have little to do with conforming to certain political cultures preferred by South Africa, as contrasts with established donors.

## **Conclusions**

Although sport presents massive opportunities for peacebuilding in Zimbabwe, several challenges can be noted as well. The first challenge is that just like any other peacebuilding strategy, such opportunity requires political will for it to be effective. The study observed that there is no political will to effectively transform the social and political tensions affecting Zimbabwean communities. For as long as the polarization

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is being driven by political elites, the transformative potential of sport as a tool for peacebuilding will remain largely peripheral.

Another challenge noted is the tendency for a top-down approach in the use of sport for peacebuilding, particularly in instances where the state is involved. Tournaments that were cited, such as the Independence Cup and the Unity Cup, are typical examples. The study noted that teams that ordinarily participated in these tournaments were cherry-picked by the political elites and thus raising questions of inclusivity and relevance of the whole tournaments to the goals of peacebuilding. Connected to this is the challenge of elitism. The tournaments focus on premier league teams that are popular with the politicians at the expense of the lower leagues and community teams that are otherwise closer to the communities.

Another area of concern is that even where the tournaments are inclusive, particularly school sports tournaments, most of them are seasonal, are played for a short period of time, and are then abandoned until the next sporting season. This has a disruptive effect on the goals of peacebuilding and thus making it difficult to judge the significance of sport in peacebuilding in the different parts of the country. If sport is to be deployed as an effective tool for peacebuilding, there is a need to ensure continuity, inclusivity, and proper funding at different levels in society.

Another challenge noted is to do with NGO initiatives. These have also been accused of being once-off events that are difficult to replicate and let alone measure in terms of impact.

Apart from that, NGOs have also been accused of fanning political divisions, as they appear to work with selected groups in society and thus undermining inclusivity. It was also noted that there is no expertise both in government and peacebuilding practitioners able to design sport for peacebuilding activities. It is not supposed to be a serendipitous occurrence that by merely hosting a sporting tournament then the goals of peacebuilding are somehow achieved. Peacebuilding must be a result of proper expert planning leading to transformation at different levels of society. When

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considering sport as a vehicle for peacebuilding, there is also a need to put in place proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

It can be concluded that sport presents massive opportunities for sustainable peacebuilding initiatives in Zimbabwe. Its ability to draw numbers is a huge resource that peacebuilders can ride on. This will greatly ensure the achievement of social inclusion, a significant requirement for sustainable and inclusive peacebuilding. Apart from the social inclusion potential of sport in peacebuilding, it can also be concluded that the generic values in most sporting disciplines such as fairness, transparency, honesty, and respect are all values that can be consolidated for the good of society and for the achievement of the long-term goals of peacebuilding. (A good example is how football contributed to the wider peace processes in the Côte d'Ivoire.)

Sport can also contribute to economic peacebuilding that will help to emancipate a lot of the unemployed youth in Zimbabwe. Economic peacebuilding is very important because it is the reason why most youths have turned to drug and alcohol abuse and thus creating a vicious cycle among the youths in Zimbabwe. Apart from drugs, the youth are easily manipulated by the unscrupulous politicians to perpetuate violence as a way of advancing their (politicians') political objectives. It can also be concluded that sport can contribute to social peacebuilding through nurturing mental well-being, healing and relationship building through team games, competition, being glorious in defeat and in victory, and knowing that competition is healthy.

However, the chapter concluded that implementation of sport, as a vehicle for peacebuilding can be very difficult in politically polarized environments. Zimbabwe is one such environment where the political terrain is much polarized and will require neutralization if sport initiatives for peace are to be effective. The other major challenge is that sport requires considerable resources to organize meaningful games. It also requires meaningful and decent infrastructure and, here, it has been noted that in Zimbabwe the resources are limited.

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Regardless of the challenges cited, it can be concluded that sport, particularly team sports, present massive and useful resources for sustainable peacebuilding in Zimbabwean communities and the world at large. However, for this to be effective there is need to invest in training at different levels of society so that the deployment of sport as a vehicle for peacebuilding is structured and informed by verifiable scientific designs. The chapter thus recommended the following:

- Invest more in researching the benefits of sport in peacebuilding and be able to identify situations and levels of peacebuilding within which sport can be deployed for peacebuilding purposes at the political, economic, and social levels.
  - Develop sport and peacebuilding intervention programmes that can be properly implemented whilst providing for an opportunity for monitoring and evaluation to document success stories.
  - Train resource persons in sport and peacebuilding given the fact that most of what is being done is largely unstructured and lack the needed expertise. These resource persons will go a long way in helping in the designing of programmes/projects and activities for peacebuilding.
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