

The Viability of Sport as an Intervention Model: Preliminary Field Notes From Kilifi, Kenyaⁱ

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Abstract

This paper presents field notes from an ongoing project aimed at assessing the effects of "sport-in-development" programs in the developing world. The rapid growth of sport-in-development programs has been accompanied by a desire to evaluate the effectiveness of such programs. To date, neither the impact of these programs or the process by which they are evaluated has been widely documented. Using Moving the Goalposts Kilifi (MTGK) as a case study, the field notes presented in this article illustrate important dimensions of the initial process of survey design and implementation and highlights the significance of these processes within the overall project.

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Introduction

This project will investigate the impact of *Moving the Goalposts Kilifi*, a "sport-in-development" program designed to increase the life skills (self-esteem, confidence, leadership, and teamwork) and HIV/AIDS and reproductive health awareness in girls in coastal Kenya. Sport initiatives have become a popular tool for promoting health, education, and gender equity in the developing world. The popularity of this model is evidenced by the United Nation's naming 2005 the "International Year of Sport and Physical Education." While sport has been shown to have positive effects on the self-esteem of girls in the western world, the effects of these programs in non-western settings remains under-studied. Furthermore, the efficacy of this model in providing HIV/AIDS and reproductive health education in developing countries is undocumented.

Using *Moving the Goalposts Kilifi (MTGK)* as a case study, the primary question addressed in this project is whether sports participation can successfully deliver intended outcomes in the developing world. To answer this question, two more specific questions are adopted. First, is sport an effective tool for providing HIV/AIDS and reproductive health education and other life skills to girls in rural coastal Kenya? Second, how can we most effectively monitor the impacts of these initiatives?

This project employs a variety of methods to answer these research questions. Quantitative methods include both a self-administered and a researcher-administered survey. Surveys will draw on a sample of over 3,000 participants involved with the organization, as well as young women from the community not participating in the MTGK initiative. Qualitative methods

will include focus group discussions, interviews, and other sources of information including "problem trees" and "life stories".

As the project is currently in its development and pilot stage, the aim of this article is to illustrate the process of developing and implementing an effective monitoring tool within the context of Kilifi, Kenya. I begin by providing selections of field notes focusing on the context in which MTGK operates, and then highlight, using field notes, important steps and issues within the early phases of the project.

MTGK's Operating Context: Field Notes on Conditions in Kilifi, Kenya

The following excerpts focus on community conditions and resources. Given the sensitivity and culturally relative nature of the concepts that this project attempts to measure (confidence, self esteem, leadership, teamwork, and sexual knowledge), it was important to develop a context-specific research instrument. The notes below highlight important issues within the environment in which MTGK operates. These topics were considered in formulating the survey instrument and arriving at realistic benchmarks against which to gauge MTGK's impact on girls and young women in the district.

A. Notes on the Position of Women and Girls

January 18, 2007. This afternoon I attended MTGK's annual planning meeting. The meeting was attended by the four volunteer committees who are responsible for organizing all league activities and for managing the budget and expenditures for each of their respective leagues (approximately 30 girls). The meeting

began with an overview of MTGK's aims and objectives, so as to ensure that each girl had a clear understanding of the organization's mission. One of the staff members, a former MTGK volunteer and now full-time employee, presented several key points about the organization. As most meetings are conducted in Kiswahili, I am not able to follow most of the information being discussed. However, there are frequently key points written on oversize paper in English. One slide was particularly effective. Entitled "Why Girls and Women?" the following points were used to underscore the struggle of women in this community: 1) Kilifi is one of the poorest districts in Kenya. 70% of the population lives in poverty, and approx 10% are infected with HIV/AIDS; 2) Early marriages and teenage pregnancy are major problems; 3) Teenage girls show the highest rates of HIV infection; 4) Poor women have the lowest rate of literacy and school enrollment; 5) Few female leaders in Kilifi; 6) Women rarely found in decision-making positions; 7) The culture of the local people (Mijikenda) is highly male dominated.

B. Notes on Attitudes Toward Women and Sport

***December 10, 2006.** I rarely see girls engaged in sporting activities, and even more rarely in the children's pickup soccer games that seem to spring up where ever there is enough space for two impromptu goals to be erected. There is a strong cultural norm that sport is a sphere reserved for boys and men. This point was driven home by a conversation I had one afternoon with the family who lives near us. The family has approximately 6 kids, most of whom are girls. We were talking about what their kids (and specifically their twins-one boy, one girl) did after school as they only attend school for half of the day. The boy stays out and plays soccer with friends,*

sometimes until 7 or 8 in the evening. The girl, however, comes home directly from school, does chores and, when time permits, plays with her sisters and several other girls who live in the area. When asked if the daughter ever goes with her brother to play soccer, the father immediately responded, "Girls do not play football. She plays girl games like kode [similar to jacks]." And I see this all around me. Young boys are free to roam, to play games, and hang out with their friends. Girls do not seem to have this same privilege. While their brothers are out playing soccer and roaming the neighborhood, girls are home, helping with the daily chores.

C. Notes on the Availability of Equipment, Fields, Coaches, etc.

January 18, 2007. Today I was talking with a Dutch volunteer at MTGK who leads the 'coach-the-coach program.' We were talking about the kinds of things she does to train the coaches (who are all young female volunteers). I was caught slightly off-guard as she reminded me that most teams have only one ball, and any practice must be planned around this limited resource. I have also heard that practices are frequently cancelled because there is no ball, or because the ball has been misplaced. I imagine that shortages of equipment are a barrier to participation, and limit the frequency with which girls partake in practices, and even in games. This is important to keep in mind when evaluating the impact of the program. It seems that by limiting the frequency of participation, the effectiveness of soccer as a tool for improving life skills may be limited as well. However, because there are few other means of reaching out to young women in the district (particularly as many do not

attend school), even small changes should be viewed as a success.

Illustrating the Process: Field-Notes From the Early Stages of Project Development

The following excerpts focus on key steps in the survey phase of the project. Two surveys are being utilized: a self-administered survey with the goal of collecting basic information about the participants in the organization (number of players, teams, age, education, and length of involvement in MTGK), and a researcher-administered survey developed to measure the life skills and sexual health knowledge of the program's participants. MTGK's Monitoring and Evaluation Team, a group of girls from within the organization who have volunteered to participate in the organization's M&E initiatives, will administer the life skills and sexual knowledge surveys.

A. Notes on the Development of the Self-Administered Survey:

December 6, 2006. The logistics of circulating these surveys to each of the teams will be more challenging than I thought. Kilifi District is large, and transportation and communication are major obstacles. Attaching the survey to the registration process seems like the most efficient way to collect data on as many girls as possible. However, the high turnover among players throughout the season is an obstacle that I had not considered prior to the start of the project. Girls drop out of the program for various reasons including finishing school, getting married, becoming pregnant, parents or husbands not approving of their participation, or just deciding they no longer want to play. I will likely have surveys from a

number of girls who register but do not play through the entire season, and will be missing information on girls that join late. This will make tracking changes in individuals over time difficult. This is also a possible problem for the implementation of the life skills survey, as we will be using information provided on the registration form in the analysis of our results. The best solution to this problem will be to have the M&E team take additional registration forms with them when they go out to do the surveys, so that if a girl is chosen for the life skills survey but has not yet filled in a form, she can do so at that time.

B. Development of the Researcher-Administered Survey

November 10, 2006. The development of the life skills survey has been challenging. This survey is the heart of the project and is designed to assess the effectiveness of sport as a tool for development (i.e. has the program led to an improvement in the life skills and sexual health awareness of its participants?). There has been little written on the subject of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in other sport-in-development programs, and I feel like we are in uncharted territory. This is both exciting and daunting. Outside of the M&E literature, there seems to be little written on measuring the impact of sport on confidence and self-esteem. What has been documented, and is more widely accessible, has been carried out primarily in the U.S. or other developed countries. Aside from the methodological considerations involved in measuring such complex outcomes, we are faced with a considerable cultural barrier. Defining self-esteem, confidence, and leadership, seems challenging enough to do in English. However, what do these concepts mean to

adolescent girls in coastal Kenya? Do they conceive of these terms in the same way that I do?

November 23, 2006. *In order to ensure that I am collecting meaningful data, it is important that I tap into aspects of confidence, self-esteem and leadership, as perceived by adolescent girls living in Kilifi District. In order to do so, I will seek input from the girls themselves. This input will primarily come from MTGK's M&E team - about 10 girls who volunteer their time. The process of developing "indicators" for each of these life skills was initiated by a previous researcher who used focus group discussions with members of the organization in 2003. However, it is clear that there is a disconnect between the way that I would define these terms, and the ideas that came out of previous work. The MTGK M&E Coordinator and I agreed that ideas generated by the previous meetings required additional work, especially as the types of questions generated were generally open-ended and not conducive to a survey format. For example, most of the question give a type of scenario and ask, "what would you do if...?"*

In order to revise the previous set of indicators, we will call an M&E meeting. The goal of the meeting will be to discuss each of the indicators previously developed, and reach an agreement on those aspects of each of the life skills that are most important. This information will be used to write the survey questions.

November 28, 2006. *This was my first experience working with the M&E team. The girls were extremely shy, and hesitant to talk or express their ideas. This may be the case for several reasons. First, most of the girls are new to the M&E process, and have only just volunteered in November. Second, the girls come from different educational backgrounds, and several of them*

have had limited formal education (either because their families could not afford fees for uniforms and books or because their families do not value the education of girls). This may create a lack of confidence in their willingness to share their ideas. Finally, the girls have been brought up in a culture where they have not been encouraged to speak freely about their ideas to elders or to strangers. It is evident that I will need to think of more innovative ways to encourage them to open up and feel more comfortable working with me.

The girls had a hard time revising the previous set of indicators. To facilitate the process, we provided each girl with a list of the questions and asked them to discuss in small groups and decide whether they thought that the questions were good, and if they thought these questions captured the relevant life skill. Again, it was clear that there was a disconnect between how I would define these concepts and the way that the girls were doing so. Getting specific ideas out of the team was extremely difficult and it was not entirely clear whether they thought the questions discussed were truly the best indicators of the life skills, or whether they just didn't want to disagree with what had been previously written. As it is important to incorporate the ideas generated in this meeting, I have some creative work to do to ensure that the survey questions bridge their ideas and mine.

The difficulty in developing our survey questions in this meeting highlights two important points and helps to shed some light on one of the primary research questions - how can we most effectively monitor these initiatives? First, it makes me realize the importance of creating an encouraging and supportive environment in which the M&E team feels comfortable expressing their thoughts. Clearly, their participation is an important part

of the process. The girls have developed useful ideas, and have enabled me to ground the questions within the context in which we are working. I believe that if I had formulated the survey prior to my arrival, it would have been unsuitable for this context, and would not have yielded interpretable results. Second, it underscores the problems associated with rapid appraisals. It would be extremely challenging for an "outsider" to conduct this type of project in a short period of time. Building trust and an environment in which the girls feel comfortable will take some time - and this will be important for ensuring that our survey is appropriate and will produce meaningful results.

February 6, 2007. *Today I held a training session to teach the M&E team to administer the Life Skills Survey. Again, the girls were very shy at the beginning of the meeting, but an "ice-breaker" game helped get them more involved. To facilitate the training, I invited a field worker from Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) to speak to the girls. This was extremely helpful for several reasons. First, she was a young woman from the local community, and could relate more closely to the girls on the M&E team, and served as a role model and an example of what they can achieve. Second, this bridged the language barrier. It would have been impossible for me to teach the difficult skill of survey administration in English as many of the girls are not fluent in this language. The choice to utilize resources within the community was extremely important.*

It was necessary to emphasize two points in the survey training: reframing questions and objectivity. The M&E team's ability to reframe or reword the survey questions without losing the question's meaning, and without making respondents feel defensive is a major

concern. To facilitate their ability to do so, we held a brainstorming session in which the girls thought of examples to illustrate each of the survey questions. I believe that the use of examples will be the best approach to ensure that respondents understand the survey questions. Discussing these examples ahead of time will hopefully improve their ability to deliver the survey. The second worry is the M&E team's ability to objectively administer the surveys. There is a concern that the girls will react to answers, or even guide respondents towards the correct answers (especially in the sexual health sections), biasing our results. To underscore the importance of objectivity, I utilized role-play, which I believe was an effective solution.

At times it seemed that the girls were getting the hang of survey administration, while at others I did not feel as confident. However, I think the decision to have the M&E team administer the surveys is a good one, especially when compared to the alternatives. One alternative is to employ a self-administered survey. However, literacy is a major obstacle, and we would not want to exclude those who cannot read, as this is one of the groups in which we are most interested in assessing the impact of the program. Another alternative is to hire field workers from the District Hospital. While feasible, the costs of this approach would be prohibitive, and unsustainable in the long-term. By using the M&E team, I am helping to build capacity within the organization, such that the survey can be repeated, or other similar surveys could be conducted by MTGK in the future with limited resources.

C. Notes on Survey Sample and Implementation

February 12, 2007. Now that the survey is ready to be administered, there are two issues that need to be

considered. First, this project poses a dilemma in terms of sample selection. While random selection of survey respondents would be ideal, this may not be the preferred approach within this context. While we are interested in observing whether participation in the program (number of years in MTGK) improves life skills and sexual health knowledge, there is also a desire to look at these outcomes within an individual over time. For this reason, turnover is a major consideration in the sample selection. Because there are girls that drop out mid-way through the season, it seems desirable to select respondents that are more "central" to their team, to ensure that they will be available for subsequent surveys. For this reason, we have asked the M&E team to "randomly" select their respondents, but to make sure that they have included some who are known to be committed to MTGK.

Second, there is a logistical question of how to reach the most respondents in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. Given the size of the district, and the difficulty of transportation and communication, this is a question that requires careful consideration. Practices are often poorly attended, and because not enough players show up, these practices are often cancelled. To maximize limited resources, surveys will only be administered on Saturdays following matches, when we are more likely to find players at the field. Data collection will therefore take much longer than initially anticipated.

Conclusion

The rapid growth of sport-in-development programs has been accompanied by a desire to evaluate the effectiveness of such programs. To date, neither the impact of these programs or the process by which they

are evaluated has been widely documented. The field notes presented in this article attempt to illustrate the part of the process of measuring the effects of sports participation on adolescent girls in Kilifi, Kenya. It is my hope that this article will contribute to a growing literature on monitoring and evaluation in sport-in-development programs, and serve as an aid for future initiatives.