

Editorial

APPROACH TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) THROUGH SPORT

ACERCAMIENTO A LOS OBJETIVOS DE DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE (ODS) A TRAVÉS DEL DEPORTE

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The Brundtland report in the year 1987 defined the concept of sustainable development as that development which makes it possible to meet the needs of the present without endangering the needs of future generations (United Nations, 1987). Based on this concept, in 2015, the United Nations (UN) created the 2030 agenda with the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets.

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the number of sporting events of different kinds (Sánchez-Sáez, 2019), with the consequences that this entails. Hallman and Breuer (2010) and Hautbois et al. (2019) relate this to economic development (job creation, increased income in the service sector...), while other authors are interested in other not strictly economic aspects such as well-being, quality of life, sense of belonging, civic pride, as well as destination image (Alonso-Dos-Santos et al., 2014; Armenakyan et al., 2012; Baldock et al., 2011; Berkowitz et al., 2007; Crompton, 2004; Kim & Walker, 2012). However, the occurrence of negative aspects such as possible damage on the flora or fauna of the site, inconvenience to the local population (Piccerillo et al., 2023; Zurita & Martínez, 2014) or the excessive carbon footprint emitted (Scrucca et al., 2016; Wicker, 2019). Assessing the accomplishment of sustainability in sporting events or programmes involves environmental, economic, social and interrelated aspects.

This editorial explores how public policies and stakeholder networks in the sport sector can promote the SDGs in both the delivery of programmes and sporting events of any dimension by strategically adjusting preventive measures. By way of example, some general aspects associated with each of the seventeen SDGs are listed.

1. End of poverty

Sport is a platform for socio-economic development. It is a source of employment and a fundraising option that directly benefits the local population.

An example in the world of sport can be the implementation of a sports programme in a disadvantaged place with a high poverty rate.

2. Zero hunger

Sport is closely linked to nutrition. Good nutrition is necessary to practice sport, and it generates an educational space in which awareness-raising messages about waste, consumption of local products, food safety, food needs in other places, etc. can be transmitted.

An example in the world of sport is the donation of leftover supplies from a sporting events to organisations such as Caritas.

3. Health and well-being

The World Health Organisation (WHO) informs us that despite the benefits of physical exercise as a preventive action and treatment for noncommunicable diseases (heart attacks, diabetes, hypertension, etc.), the population is becoming less

physically active (WHO, 2018). Sport has become a basic tool for achieving healthy habits that favour physical and mental well-being.

There are many examples in the world of sport that develop leisure activities seeking the well-being of participants.

4. Quality education

Different studies relate physical activity and academic results. Moreover, by practising sport, values related to education such as teamwork, leadership, perseverance, strength, etc. are worked on.

There are many sports teams that, seeking the integral education of their athletes, work on aspects related to the academic world in order to improve the quality of life of their athletes.

5. Gender equality

Sport is used as a model to show gender equality. It is a springboard for demonstrating change and rejection of a male chauvinist culture where women were discriminated against in some areas of society. By demonstrating the existence of gender equality in sport, it can be extrapolated to other areas of society.

A clear example in the world of sport is the appearance of women's sport in the media.

6. Clean water and sanitation

On some occasions, access to clean water is provided through sports facilities. In addition, these facilities become awareness-raising platforms where this fundamental good is given the value it deserves.

There are sports facilities that become meeting places for the local population, favouring their development.

7. Affordable and non-polluting energy

Energy efficiency and renewable energies are making inroads into sport in the quest to reduce the carbon footprint of both sports programmes and events (Ulloa-Hernández et al., 2023).

The world of sport is already looking for self-sufficient sports facilities that produce the energy they need by installing solar panels or harnessing wind power.

8. Decent work and economic growth

As in any niche market, sport has objectives and, for this, paid work is necessary. This employability is necessary to achieve the goals through cooperation, teamwork and the dedication necessary to reach the proposed goals.

The start-up of a sports club may start with few projects, but with the inherent advantages of sport, it can grow and expand the employability needs, with the consequent economic growth.

9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure

The world of sport is closely linked to innovation. Improvements in materials are continuous and with them the evolution of sport. Sustainable and quality infrastructures are also in demand to meet the current sporting demand.

A clear example of this objective is the evolution of mountain safety materials or the creation of sports pavilions that are more environmentally friendly in terms of the use of materials or renewable energy sources.

10. Reducing inequalities

Sport has become a clear example of social inclusion. It is open to any kind of adaptation that allows the inclusion of vulnerable users with all kinds of characteristics, but without losing the values of sport.

The most notable example is the Paralympics, but we can already see in numerous sporting events the inclusion of different groups that manage to get closer to sport.

11. Sustainable cities and communities

Nowadays it is difficult to think of a city without sports facilities. Society demands the service to achieve the benefits offered by sport and, at the same time, it is conceived in a sustainable way in order to be able to provide a service for future generations.

In these sports facilities it is easy to find volunteer activities, rubbish collection, fundraising events for a good purpose, etc. that bring about social cohesion and collaboration with the objective of achieving a sustainable community.

12. Responsible production and consumption

It is becoming increasingly important for sports events and programmes to adjust products and consumption by reviewing the reports of previous events or programmes. The environmental awareness of athletes as well as organisers is increasing.

In the world of sport, it is essential to have a strategic environmental impact assessment in order not to consume more than necessary, avoiding expenditure on materials, shipments and storage of surplus.

13. Climate action

Climate change puts unconventional facilities for various nature sports at risk. Sportsmen and sportswomen are the first to take care of their facilities and thus of the natural environment. This is why there are many environmental movements to fight against climate change. Athletes who practice their activity in nature are more environmentally aware.

A clear example of the achievement of this objective of sustainable development are the occasions on which litter clean-ups are carried out in different natural environments promoted by the different sports federations.

14. Underwater life

Underwater life is more fragile and is being punished by uncontrolled dumping.

One of the activities of the diving clubs is the organisation of some rubbish collection from the environment where they practice their sports. The waste they dispose of may come from many kilometres inland, but has been washed into the sea during periods of heavy rainfall.

15. Life of terrestrial ecosystems

One must be very respectful and try not to influence ecosystems as some are very fragile. Athletes must be careful of their impact on the soil, flora and fauna due to various problems that may be caused, such as soil compaction, the introduction/elimination of species (flora or fauna), or the alteration of landscapes, among others.

In some cases, when carrying out tests in nature, several areas are avoided due to the appearance of sensitive flora or fauna. This requires the cooperation of sports agents with the Department of the Environment.

16. Peace, justice and solid institutions

Sport has in its characteristics the promotion of development and peace (Guette et al., 2019). When there is a welcoming environment, with communication links and respectful interpersonal relationships, new social dynamics are generated, generating peace-related policies.

It is worth highlighting under this heading the episodes of military truce experienced during the Olympic Games.

17. Alliances to achieve the objectives

Local, regional, national and international agents unite in favour of a common objective together with public or private entities belonging to the world of tourism, the economy, the environment, society or the athletes themselves. They all come together in an interdisciplinary way in favour of their objectives.

The international federations set objectives for the sustainable development of sport that each agent specifies in order to achieve the objective at their level of action.

This is a brief approximation to the approach to the SDG through Sport. In some cases there is a direct relationship between these goals and, by acting on one of them, others are also favoured. This means that the 169 goals proposed by the UN in 2015 need to be implemented in the world of sport in order to turn them into something more quantifiable.

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