

International Sport Development Cooperation Symposium

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Since the 1960s, German sport organisations have supported the development of sport in at least 100 countries by conducting more than 1,300 cooperation projects. In most cases, these have been within the overall context of German foreign policy towards developing countries and have been made possible by the support of the federal government and, in particular, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Generally, these projects have been designed to promote the creation or strengthening of sport structures that will outlast the particular project. Tailor-made programmes, often featuring the education of local experts to work within the structures, have been developed taking into account the economic and social conditions within the partner countries. Project duration has varied from a few weeks up to four or five years.

National federations, including the German athletics federation (DLV), have worked together with the German Olympic Sport Confederation (DOSB) to provide the organisational and technical expertise required. Experts are specifically educated and prepared for projects.

To evaluate this work, particularly the projects that have been focused on athletics, from the perspectives of both the experts and beneficiaries and to look to the future, 40 experts from Germany and abroad gathered in Berlin from 16 to 18 December 2008

for the International Sport Development Cooperation Symposium. The event was jointly staged by the DLV, the DOSB and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Welcome speeches were given by Mrs Dagmar Freitag, Member of Parliament and Vice President of the DLV, Mr Stefan Krawilicki, the Director of 612 Div. German Schools Abroad and International Youth and Sport Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ms Katrin Merkel, Head of the Department of International Affairs at the DOSB. In the course of the opening a special welcome was given to Mr Ulrich Jonath, the first German expert involved in international Development Cooperation.

The main presentations covered the following topics:

- a framework for what can be achieved through Development Cooperation in the future;
- the relationship between sports for all and elite sport;
- evaluation of synergies possible in development projects;
- examples of best practice;
- an overview on a possible professional career pathway for experts in Development Cooperation.

There was also a presentation by Mr Peter Thompson, IAAF Senior Manager for Education, on the IAAF Coaches Education and Certification System (CECS).

In the discussions that took place around the presentations the following conclusions were agreed:

1. The greatest values of the work by the project experts include 1) the sport specific effects of successfully completed projects, 2) the creation of a network that non-sport organisation can draw on and 3) positive general advertisements for Germany.
2. Partner countries perceive the education programmes at the schools for foreign coaches in Mainz and Leipzig, where the participants come to Germany to study, to have an importance and impact on the perception of Germany and its development cooperation efforts similar to the projects delivered in their countries by the German government and sport organisations.
3. Sport in general should be protected from expectations of being a problem-solving tool for serious socio-economic problems such as hunger, poverty or economic under-development.
4. The assumption that sport provides positive social effects (for example nation building, education or emancipation of women) needs to be challenged, and, in all probably, more modest expectations would be appropriate.
5. Project experts should concentrate on the creation of sport specific structures, keeping in mind that sport structures are not simply transferred from advanced to developing countries.
6. Aspects of Sport for All, social objectives and sport for the disabled need to be integrated into projects, even those focused on high-performance sport.
7. Project experts should not act as coaches for the top athletes in the respective partner countries. Focus should be on the build-up of structures rather than active coaching.
8. The connection between long-term projects and the German schools for foreign coaches need to be strengthened.
9. Too many authorities are involved in the process of nomination of project experts, which complicates appointments and correct consideration of the needs of the partner country.
10. Often, projects are conceived without reference to a system or standard methodology for needs assessment. This has been one of the main reasons for failed projects in the past.
11. Project experts for long-term projects would like to see a more proactive human resource policy, including re-integration opportunities after long-term stays abroad.
12. Great importance must be given to the profile of experts selected for projects. Table 1 shows the most important characteristics discussed.
13. Evaluation of projects is crucial and former long-term experts could be utilised as evaluators. An effective evaluation includes a proper set of realistic objectives, detailed planning (pre-visits included), regular self- and external evaluation, appropriate evaluation tools and evaluation criteria to which both the client in the partner country and the project experts have agreed.
14. It was suggested that in situations where the development of a coach education programme is appropriate, it might be more cost effective to introduce the existing IAAF CECS than to build up a similar programme from scratch.

A more detailed report on the symposium is available (in German only) from the author of this report.

Table 1: Hierarchy of characteristics for international sport development project experts (athletics)

Mandatory characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional involvement in athletics - Language skills (mastery of the language(s) of the project country) - Training (coaching license and/or sports studies, coaching experience) - Education in coaching (sport studies, involvement in lecturing in CECS) - Sport for All (education or expertise, practice related skills) - Soft skills (communication, team person, motivator, friendly, humble, reliable) - Sport organisation (leadership skills and experience)
Minimal skills profile:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - B-licence in athletics - C-licence Sports for All or sports studies with a specialisation in athletics - Several years of practical involvement in club or/and federation and/or school sport. - Leadership and soft skills
Complementary skills to be acquired through follow-up courses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sport organisation, officiating - Coaching experience in Sports for All - Knowledge of the culture and sport organisation of the project country - Special language mastery
Desirable special competencies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience in international development - Experience in the protocol, customs and etiquette of other cultures

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