

APYouthNet Online Discussion:
(20 November – 29 November, 2013)
“Sports for Youth Development”
Background Note

Almost half of the world’s unemployed youth live in Asia and the Pacific region. Both young job seekers and employers opine that a lack of employable skills set is the main obstacle for young people in securing decent employment opportunities and excelling in their careers. Many governments in the region are looking to adopt and strengthen technical and vocational education for young people to hone their hard skills and thus, tackling the youth employment crisis.

While governments mainly focus on honing young people’s hard skill sets, employers pointed out that bearing soft skills is as important and challenging as having technical expertise. Soft skills such as interpersonal skills, leadership and communication skills help young people succeed in their education, job training, employment seeking and life. However, there are limited opportunities for young people to learn soft skills at school as many educators assume that children learn soft skills at home.

From a development perspective, team sports can aid in individual development through self-discovery, improve social integration skills such as accepting racial differences and understanding cultures and encourage clear and concise communication. With these improvements, young people can gain self-confidence and awareness, which then allows employers to ‘buy in’.

There have been attempts by many UN agencies and NGOs, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), to adopt sports activities in youth development as sport could teach basic values and important life skills for young people. For example, ILO created decent jobs and income-generating opportunities for youth in Albania, El Salvador, Senegal and Mozambique through Youth Sport Programme. Also, Partners of the Americas (A Ganar Alliance) offered youth workforce development training to 8,500 young people by providing skills training along with participating in sport activities.

This online discussion would like to encourage exchange of thoughts among experts in various fields on the effectiveness of sports activities in increasing the youth employability. In this sense, we would like to facilitate this discussion with the following two questions:

- 1) **Can soft skills be taught in school settings?**
- 2) **Which sports activities are better in meeting the objectives of improving the soft skills of young people? How can we adopt such sports activities in a youth development project?**