SPORT IN DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOODS

Olympic City: Antwerp
Country: Belgium
Edition of the Games: 1920 Olympic Summer Games

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

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<th>WHEN</th>
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<td>Permanent since 2001</td>
<td>Disadvantaged neighbourhoods</td>
<td><a href="http://www.antwerpen.be/sport">www.antwerpen.be/sport</a></td>
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The Sport in Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods is a targeted programme from the City of Antwerp that promotes a healthier lifestyle true sport amongst the poorer and more underprivileged communities within the City. The programme wants to encourage people who do not or hardly practise sports to start sporting in their neighbourhood.

The Sport in Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods introduced a collection of various initiatives designed to make access to sport easier for the poor communities within the city, thereby increasing their participation rates in sport and physical activity and improving the overall quality of health within these groups.

Specifically, the programme removes the barriers to access that exist across social, financial and physical dimensions.

The programme also aims to help instil behaviours and values that will assist the participants in their everyday lives and help them to move out of poverty and towards a brighter future. Having started with only two pilot communities, Antwerp’s Sport in Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods now covers twelve different communities totalling thousands of active participants.
OBJECTIVES

Develop human capital and generate social cohesion

The overriding objective of the programme is to provide a better quality of life for all those that take part through the medium of sport. The vast majority of participants are unemployed and have not had the same educational opportunities as those in other areas. This presents huge barriers when it comes to being able to escape the poverty trap and the dangers that come with it. Sport in Disadvantaged Areas uses sport to help participants boost morale, build a network and build skills and competencies. If successful, this can help form the basis for a fresh start or new opportunities for those involved.

Promote a healthy and active lifestyle

While increased levels of obesity and other inactivity-related illness are universal, they are particularly pronounced in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. The Sport in Disadvantaged Areas programme aims to directly intervene in this development by providing access to sport and physical activities to such areas around the City. This helps to make it as easy as possible for these residents to adopt a healthier and active lifestyle.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Internal & External Stakeholders

The City of Antwerp Department of Sport
City of Antwerp Department of Social Affairs
City of Antwerp Department of Education
City of Antwerp Department of Employment and economy
The City of Antwerp Department of Communications

Various local NGOs, social partners, schools and sports clubs
K.R.A.S. (Youth and Social Sport)

Finance and Cost

The current total cost of operations is €350,000 annually.
Each community has a budget of approximately €12,000 and there are currently twelve communities being served by the programme.
Use of the Olympic Brand

As the Olympic Games in Antwerp were organised a long time ago, there is no direct connection between this programme and the Games. However, with the centenary of the 1920 Games in Antwerp approaching, the City has already begun planning on how to use the commemoration to activate the Olympic heritage and movement amongst the population. The context presents an opportunity for Sport in Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods to get involved.

Human Resources and Time

There are 20 employees working on the programme over varying degrees of time commitment.

Each community has its own project coordinator totalling twelve coordinators across the City. The project is run on a year-around basis.

EVALUATION

The programme is evaluated on a combined qualitative and quantitative basis. Every year, feedback discussions are held with participants and this is recorded and analysed. Quantitative analysis of participation rates, response times and choice of sports is also performed to help improve the service with each passing year.

KEY CHALLENGES

Breaking down cultural barriers

The City of Antwerp has a rich ethnic diversity and approximately 80% of the Sport in Disadvantaged Areas programme are not of Belgian origin. Often it can be a challenge for participants to cross the cultural divides amongst themselves. They can be closed socially, operating only in their own small, tightly knit social circles. This can make the task of getting them up and active and engaging with their peers difficult.

To assist participants, once they join the programme they are immediately offered a host of services aimed at helping them adapt and improve their social skills. These services include language classes and cultural education courses. This helps to break down difficulties and smooth the passage into continuous communal engagement.

Retaining contact with participants

One of the most common challenges faced by the individual community project coordinators is staying in contact with participants and those eligible to join the programme. The personal circumstances facing young individuals from disadvantaged communities can be varied and complex and there can be a multitude of reasons why they are unable or unwilling to engage. As a result, there is no set method or process on how to locate, contact and motivate these individuals and this is a frequent source of difficulty.

To help mitigate against this, each participant is registered when they first get
involved and they become part of the programme network. From the beginning, effort is made to help participants understand the benefits of the programme and more and more creative and effective ways to do this are constantly being tested. This helps to generate an appreciation for the programme, improving motivation and increasing the retention rates of participants.

**Conducting a language policy**

Knowledge of the local language increases the chances of integration. With the development of a methodology to implement language training opportunities in sport and physical activity, by training teachers for this purpose and the use of icons in the infrastructure we want to offer opportunities to improve language skills to people with language delay.

**Empowerment of youngsters**

In the squares and through partner organizations, young people will be reached with a competence-enhancing course. We give them training and offer them opportunities to get started as a volunteer, student employee or in social employment if necessary.

**KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Collaborate with local partners**

Sport in Disadvantaged Areas may have a specific target group but it is a city-wide undertaking. As a result, a large number of local partners are engaged to help deliver on the ground. One of the strengths of the programme is the City recognizing that they are not experts in everything and there are others that are better prepared than them, with a better appreciation of the local environment who can do a better job in implementation. The City is happy to collaborate with local groups and gives them space to deliver the various initiatives in the way they feel best fits the community in question. This also reduces the workload on the City, allowing it to focus on broader strategy and the expansion of the programme.

**Build an enthusiastic team**

A project of this scope and with this many moving parts requires a significant amount of dedication, time and effort. There are many unforeseen challenges involved and there is often a high degree of empathy and social sensitivity needed when dealing with individuals with complex circumstances. As a result, the commitment and attitude of all those involved in delivery is the key success factor for the programme. A high degree of emphasis is placed on recruiting staff and partners that display passion for the task above all else. There is a very visible link between the level of passion and the results generated by those working within the communities.
Behaviour by local government

Bet on chance groups costs a lot of money and manpower. It is important that local government is aware of the importance of focusing on these groups and really chooses to release the necessary funds. By focusing on sport for disadvantaged groups we reach these people and also reveal other social needs. The employees send them to the competent authorities who can help them further.

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https://www.antwerpen.be/nl/overzicht/sporting-a