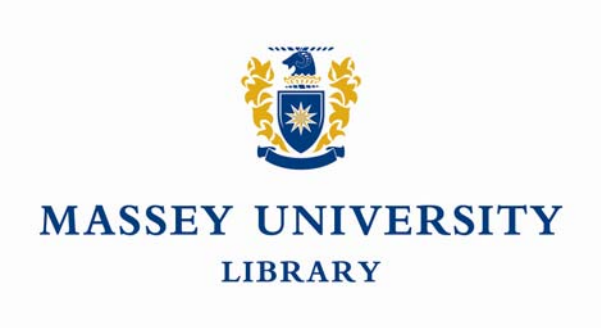

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Sport as a vehicle for development:
The influence of rugby league in/on the Pacific

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M. Brook

Institute of Development Studies
Massey University, New Zealand

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Abstract

In the field of development the relationship between development and sport has for the most part been ignored (Beacom 2007, Levermore 2008). When it has been discussed it occurs in a way whereby 'sport is seen as a by-product of development not as an engine' (United Nations 2006 cited in Levermore 2008:184). While conceptualisations of the sport and development relationship have begun to emerge, as noted in recent United Nations documents (also see AusAid 2008), an argument persists that the use of sport for development remains unproven (World Bank 2006). In keeping with post-development thinking which seeks to explore differing visions and expressions of development and by taking a strengths-based approach to the sport and development nexus, this paper considers critically the notion of sport as an engine of development. We will focus specifically on the role of rugby league, the NRL, and the Pacific region in relation to community development, youth development and crime prevention, health promotion and prevention, in particular HIV/AIDS and family violence, and economic opportunities and poverty alleviation.

Key words: Development, Pacific, Papua New Guinea (PNG), rugby league, sport.

Biographical notes

Rochelle Stewart-Withers is currently a lecturer in the sociology of development at the University of Queensland, returning to Massey University for the 2010 academic year. Rochelle has undertaken research in Samoa investigating suicide and suicide prevention and female-headed households. Rochelle has a particular interest in the application of cultural frameworks to development issues, in Pacific people, and the notion of sport-for-development where she is now working with Martin Brook with support from an NZAid research grant looking at the viability of rugby league as a vehicle for development in/on the Pacific.

Dr Martin Brook is a senior lecturer in physical geography at Massey University. His primary research interests lie in the response of glaciers to climate forcing, over contemporary timescales, and the Quaternary (last 2.6 Million years). He has a rapidly emerging secondary research interest sport and development, or more specifically, rugby league and development in the Pacific, and is currently a recipient of an NZAid research grant (in conjunction with Rochelle Stewart-Withers) to study this in PNG and Fiji.

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Introduction

While conceptualisations of the sport and development relationship have begun to emerge, as noted in various United Nations documents and as can be seen in the 195 page literature review on Sport for Development and Peace which was recently commissioned by the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, SDP IWG, in 2007 (also see AusAid 2008), an argument persists that the use of Sport-for-Development (SFD) remains unproven (World Bank 2006). It is suggested that SFD requires ongoing conceptualisation, debate and research, particularly case examples which draw upon primary data (SDP IWG 2007). Therefore the aim of this paper is to first, explore critically the sport and development relationship and second, by drawing on the code of rugby league and the NRL and using examples occurring in the Pacific, to illustrate further the SFD idea. The authors' intentions to undertake field research concludes the paper.

Conceptualising sport

Outside of the development industry the benefits of sport at the individual and community level have been argued for years (Beutler 2008:359). Sport is good for one's physical health in that those who participate are exerting themselves physically and are developing cardio-vascular fitness and maintaining bone and muscle strength (Zakus, Njelesani and Darnell 2007). Sport contributes to social and emotional wellbeing as participants' develop feelings of belonging, enjoy camaraderie, and experience pride and a sense of achievement upon doing well (Donnelly, Darnell and Coakley 2007). Sport is said to be a means for promoting inclusion, health and wellbeing for those who may be positioned outside of mainstream, for example, people with disabilities (Parnes and Hashemi 2007, Wilde 2007). Sport can provide positive role models (Cameron and MacDougall 2000), be utilised to foster child and youth development and education (Parnes and Hashemi 2007) and it offers opportunities for paid employment as coaches, players, or those working in advertising and promotion (Nauright 2004).

Despite the potential benefits, in the development literature the relationship between development and sport has for the most part been ignored.[1] When it has been discussed it occurs in a way whereby 'sport is seen as a by-product of development not as an engine' (United Nations 2006 cited in Levermore 2008:184). Using sport as a means for achieving development goals appears to have occurred in an ad-hoc, informal, isolated fashion (Beacom 2007, Beutler 2008:359, Jackson and Haigh 2008:349) with those institutions at the forefront of promoting SFD initiatives coming from the sporting sector (Levermore 2008:188).

Reasons for this may be that sport is perceived to be digressing from what is important in development (Levermore 2008:188). When faced with monetary constraints brought about by Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), rising inflation, or devaluing currencies coupled with poorly developed infrastructure, governments must make decisions about competing priorities (Lawson 2005:135). 'In the context of poverty and deprivation, sport is surely something of luxury when set against the demands of food, health and education' (Whannel 1985:54). Thus for many of those involved in development, sport is said to be about recreation rather

[1] In saying this substantive research which looks at the relationship between sport and development can be found in the sport studies literature (Levermore 2008:184).

than a 'value-based engine for social change' (ILO 2005 cited in Levermore 2008). As mentioned briefly above even those advocating SFD see development as secondary after the establishment of sporting infrastructure. In some instances the sport-development message has also become lost in the rhetoric because grand claims spouting sport as a panacea to cure all have been put forth with little supporting evidence (Levermore 2008:188). In agreement, Keim (2006) cautions against seeing sport as the answer to all, arguing that it is fundamental that false claims are not made and that expectations that will never be met are not raised. Sport alone is unable to address problematic political structures, access to land, affordable housing, or egalitarian distribution of income (Keim 2006:103). Regardless the idea that sport has much to offer developing nations certainly warrants exploration, more so given the gaps in the development literature.

Sport-for-development

Sport is starting to gain recognition as a 'simple, low-cost, and effective means of achieving development goals' (SDP IWG 2007).[2] With impetus from various sporting figures who began a programme of sport-focused humanitarian assistance called Olympic Aid[3] now 'Right to Play', through a series of conferences and the establishment of the SDP IWG which includes actors from national governments, the United Nations and civil society, there is a particular focus on working together to gather evidence, develop policy and make recommendations on ways to incorporate sport as a tool for development in national and internal programs and strategies (SDP IWG 2007:3). Kidd (2008:370) notes 166 organisations, a huge underestimation, listed on the International Platform on Sport for Development website (for an overview of the sport and development trajectory see Beutler 2008, Giulianotti 2004, Jackson and Haigh 2008, Kidd 2008). Clear links have now been articulated in relation to how Sport for Development and Peace can achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Beutler 2008). Some of the key moments and documents are as listed:

- Olympic Aid (1994) became Right to Play (2003)
- United Nation recognises potential …appoints Special Advisor (2001)
- SDP IWG (Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group) - established (2004) (Four year policy initiative)
- IYSPE (International Year of Sport and Physical Education) (2005)
- Magglingen (2005) Call for Action – various conferences
- Sport for Development and Peace: Towards Achieving the MDGs (2005)
- Sport for Development and Peace – The Way Forward (2006)
- Literature reviews SDP (2007) Secretariat SDP IWG.

[2] Or, as Kidd (2008:370) states, 'new social movement'.

[3] 'Right to Play' is arguably the world's highest profile development through sports organisation. Originally known as Olympic Aid the organisation emerged prior to the 1994 Winter Olympics when the founder Johann Koss, a Gold medal winner, sought to direct all his energy into donations for humanitarian and refugee assistance programmes. With a shift towards development through sports initiatives with its SportWorks programmes which focused on physical and social development for children in then Africa, Asia and Latin American region, 'Olympic Aid' became 'Right to Play' in 2003. This organisation assumed the role of Secretariat for the 'Sports for Development and Peace: International Working Group' which is an amalgam of governments, sports development stakeholders, and the United Nations currently formulating policies to guide development through sport initiatives internationally (Kidd 2008).

A clear statement has been made by the SDP IWG (2007), a four year policy initiative which produced a report titled 'Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments', that well-designed programs that prioritise the best values of sport can drive development goals forward. Thus, four strategic development areas to focus upon have now been put forward, these are: (1) Basic Education and Child Development; (2) Health Promotion and Disease Prevention; (3) Conflict Resolution and Peace Education; and (4) Community Development.

Levermore (2008:185–6) in reviewing the literature and various sport for development initiatives, some multilateral, bilateral and local, suggests grouping initiatives into six clusters (as cross cutting themes more than discrete clusters), these are as follows: (1) Conflict Resolution and Intercultural Understanding; (2) Building Physical, Social, Sport and Community Infrastructure; (3) Raising Awareness, particularly through Education; (4) Empowerment; (5) Direct Impact on Physical and Psychological Health, as well as General Welfare; and (6) Economic Development/Poverty Alleviation (also see Lawson 2005:138–9 for contributions that sport can potentially make to sustainable and integrated social and economic development and SDP IWG 2007 for Literature reviews on Sport for Development and Peace).

On a cautionary note Beacom (2007) argues there is a difference between 'development of sport' and 'development through sport' (also see Kidd 2008). Sport development, humanitarian sport assistance and sport for development and peace can become blurred in rhetoric and practice. Policy and plans may employ the language of development, yet funding for the most part continues to be invested in sport (Kidd 2008:373). At times there has been a notable lack of discussion between donors and recipients meaning recipients lack ownership thus control over projects (Giulianotti 2004).

Moreover, Giulianotti (2004) identifies that rather than assuming 'sports to always be a force for positive transformation', it is important to remember sport is not without its criticisms. Sport is a place where many undesirable human traits such as cheating, drug abuse, corruption and excessive nationalism are exhibited (Levermore 2008:188), and sport amplifies matters of homophobia and the marginalisation of women (McKay *et al.* 2004, Spracklen and Spracklen 2008, Whannel 1985:55). Giulianotti (2004) writes of a need to be wary of 'sports evangelists' who in locating themselves in Third World countries seek to 'promote organised sporting activities to dissipate the lower orders' dangerous energies and to divert them from 'licentious' social practices (such as drinking, gambling, casual sex and the following of youth subcultures', argued to be a form of neo-colonial repositioning (p.356).

There are also numerous accounts of bad behaviour by sport persons inside and outside of the sporting arena, for example the Brisbane Broncos players who were recently heavily fined by their club but not charged by police for alleged sexual assaults on a young woman in Brisbane nightclub in September 2008 (see Koch 2008). In relation to human rights, peace and development:

> Sport can easily prove far more dysfunctional than functional to social order, in dramatising or intensifying sources of social conflict, as expressed for example, through nationalism, sexism, racism and other strains of xenophobia (Giulianotti 2004:356).

Examples of Giulianotti's (2004) conclusions include the Nazis and the 1936 Olympics, the Arab attacks in the 1972 Olympics, the 500 demonstrators who were murdered by Mexican security forces 10 days prior to the announcement that Mexico

would host the Olympic Games, the 1982 Commonwealth Games held in Brisbane which saw Queensland pass an act to clear indigenous people from the streets[4] and the countless acts of football hooliganism seen around the world (Giulianotti 2004:356–7). Let us not forget the recent Olympics in Beijing where protesters and those deemed undesirable were cleared from the streets (Spencer and Foster 2008).

In support of Giulianotti (2004) research by Lea-Howarth (2006) questions the role of sport in the pursuit of peace and conflict resolution and argues that despite the potential for sport to be a model for demonstrating successful conflict resolutions and for developing positive characteristics it in fact encourages conflict, aggression and social inequity (also see Bredemeir and Shields 1996 for earlier arguments of the same nature). Thus given the aforementioned it is important that the sport and development relationship is given sound critical thought, in terms of what it can and cannot do, which also requires application of a lens whereby development is thought about and practiced differently (Gibson-Graham 2004).

Theoretical lens

Post development thinking and a strengths-based approach to development

While post-development thinking advocates a number of ideas, of interest to this paper is the desire to see diverse interpretations of and approaches to economic and social development, one whereby development is supportive of local and specific examples of development that are grounded in a cultural context (Gibson-Graham and Cameron 2007, Ziai 2007). This is where we see the SFD paradigm best located. We also advocate a strengths-based approach to the issue.

A strengths-based approach to development operates on the premise that people have strengths and resources to work under adverse conditions for their own empowerment and have the ability to self determine first, what constitutes development and second, how this is to be achieved. A strengths-based approach offers a different language to describe difficulties and struggles and a different lens for framing issues through.

Traditionally development models concentrated on deficits, problems, vulnerability and gaps, noting clearly what was missing. This approach very much ignored the experiences of those who were the participants. Drawing on appreciative inquiry, strengths based methodologies do not ignore problems instead they shift the frame of reference when defining the issues by focusing on what is working well, informing successful strategies and supporting the adaptive growth of organisations, communities and individuals (Gray 2002).

At a grass roots level a strengths-based approach can be utilised to encourage community participation and has greater success when it comes to identifying existing competencies and capacities within a community. The community's capacities include skills, material resources, equipment, social relationships and potential sources of funds (Gray 2002). This is also very much in keeping with post-development particularly if we keep in the mind the above-mentioned arguments by

[4] See also Warren 2004 for accounts of the 1982 Commonwealth Games and Godwell 2000 for responses to the 2000 Olympics held in Sydney.

Gibson-Graham and Cameron (2008) and Ziai (2007) that call for us to think about and practice development differently.

Given the idea that diverse interpretations of and approaches to economic and social development are acceptable and that these approaches will have both strengths and weaknesses and the argument that communities and individuals have existing competencies and capacities, it is clear that participation in sport can potentially provide a number of benefits at both the individual and the community level. In saying this, the SFD concept or the notion of league as a vehicle for development does need to be thought about in relation to what the potential benefits to individuals and the community may be, what the costs, benefits and multiplier effects maybe. While there are certainly numerous anecdotal examples in relation to example rugby and places such as Samoa[5] the SFD concept has not been rigorously explored yet.

Case example: rugby league

So what is rugby league?

Rugby league is a competitive full-contact team sport played by two teams of thirteen, and is one of the two major codes of rugby football, the other being rugby union. Rugby league originated in 1895 as a breakaway faction of the English Rugby Football Union (RFU), and similar breakaway factions occurred from RFU-affiliated rugby unions in Australia and New Zealand in 1907 and 1908 (Collins 2006). The 1895 schism was caused by the RFU's decision to enforce the amateur principle of the sport, preventing 'broken time payments' to players who had taken time off work to play rugby. Northern teams typically had more working class players (coal miners, mill workers etc.) who could not afford to play without this compensation, in contrast to Southern teams who had other sources of income to sustain the amateur principle (Collins 2006).

League's presence globally

The 'league' code is most prominent and is played professionally in England, Australia, New Zealand (the current world champions), France and Papua New Guinea, the only country in the world where it is considered a national sport. The game is played to a lesser extent in several other countries, such as Russia, the United States, Lebanon, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. The two strongest and most lucrative competitions for players are the English 'Super League' and the Australian National Rugby League (NRL). The rules of the sport have changed significantly over the decades since rugby football split into the league and union codes. Rugby league players in particular tend to require the physical attributes of power, acceleration, speed, agility, and sprint momentum. This is because of the game's fast pace and

[5] In the context of Samoa or Fiji and in relation to rugby union, earnings and the provision of support from top athletes is spoken of and can be seen through the establishment of small businesses, building of houses, funding of village infrastructure, or paying of school fees for relatives through regular remittances sent or financial support given with contributions being publicly acknowledged. For example in Samoa signs stating 'Welcome to the Village of All Black Michael Jones' are visible. The issue of sport players being seen as role models is also anecdotally accounted. In first presenting this idea to the DEVNET 2008 conference feedback from those working in community and social development in PNG was that people were more likely to listen to messages about safe sex, halting violence or addressing drug and alcohol problems from an NRL player than for example, a political leader.

the expansive size of the playing-field (Baker and Newton 2008), as well as the inherent high-impact collisions involved (Hoskins *et al.* 2006).

The presence of league in the Pacific

Rugby league has a strong presence in the Pacific and indeed the Pacific has a strong presence in rugby league. As noted in the Samoan Observer, Cadigan (2008) writes 'one in four players in the NRL are of Pacific Island descent…no less than 100 NRL players come from Samoan, Tongan, Māori, Fijian or Cook island backgrounds.' So as not to distort the facts by including the Warriors (the New Zealand club that plays in the Australian NRL competition), they go on to say that of the fifteen Australian clubs, 22.5 per cent (or eighty-six players) have Pacific island backgrounds. The trend can also be seen amongst under 20 players as well as under 18's and 16's (Cadigan 2008).

Rugby league has been in the spotlight, more so in recent months, because of the Rugby League World Cup competition which was played out over the months of October and November (2008) in Australia. Out of the ten teams competing there was definitely a Southern hemisphere dominance which included four Pacific Island teams, Fiji, PNG, Tonga and Samoa (not counting New Zealand and Australia which are of course geographically located in the Pacific and may also comprise of players with Pacific Island backgrounds). A 'friendly' game was also played between an Australian aboriginal Dreamtime team and New Zealand Māori.

The performance by the PNG team in Townsville against the English team was stated to be one of the big surprises of the tournament (The Australian 2008 October 28th). With the New Zealand 'Kiwis' winning the Rugby League World Cup for the first time since the inaugural tournament in 1954, the profile of rugby league across the Pacific has been raised enormously.

For many of those scouting in the world of rugby league Pacific Island players are seen to be worthy contributors to the game of league. As so inappropriately put by television pundit and former league player Mark Geyer (The Sunday Roast 2008) in making reference to the New Zealand Warriors team who were due to play in the NRL quarter-finals, the Warriors finally had the 'right mix of salt and pepper' which gave them a more favourable chance of winning. While we personally do not subscribe to this notion of viewing players in relation to their skin colour the fact is that for many of those working in the league industry those that come from a Pacific Island background including those who are Māori are seen to have a natural ability which can be built upon. This perception of natural ability, whether right or wrong, is starting to open many doors for those in countries such as PNG, Samoa, New Zealand, Tonga and Fiji.

Moreover, the standout performance by Fiji, seeing them placed in the quarter-finals of the World Cup and by PNG as noted above, have seen for example three PNG players (Jesse Joe, Anton Kui and Charlie Wabo) finalising contracts with NRL clubs (Read 2008), and a commitment by Fijian players to put winnings back into the local setting so as to develop the game (Burke 2008). Regarding country specific relations the governments of Australia and PNG are seeking to implement the PNG-Australia SFD initiative focusing on strengthening sport administration, participation in sport coupled with health promotion. Examples of league doing development, specifically the NRL's role in community development and involvement in development in the Pacific will now be explored.

League doing development

Community development

Rugby league has assisted with community development at both a local and regional level via local amateur competitions and the high-profile, fully-professional NRL competition. Spence (2002) highlights that on a local level rugby league has long been used as a tool to enhance indigenous community cohesion, providing positive recreation, community and personal development opportunities. In 2002 the Queensland Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Policy spoke of grassroots initiatives via rugby league that were to be utilised to bring about positive and sustainable progress for communities. One such example is the establishment of the Cape York rugby league competition which involves nineteen teams who also seek to address alcohol abuse and violence within their communities. Initiatives include the establishment of men's groups and the fact that all games are alcohol free (Spence 2002).

Oxfam Australia also engages in doing community development with indigenous communities - drawing on rugby league as a vehicle to deliver development. One such example is when the Normanton Building Safer Communities Action Team which included staff from Gulf Regional Health Services which is supported by Oxfam approached the Noramanton Stingers Rugby league Football Club to run a campaign about domestic violence. The slogan 'Domestic Violence—It's not our Game' was taken up by the team with members of the team agreeing to be community role models—thus it was agreed that any form of domestic violence would result in team members being banned from the team and the game. The campaign demonstrated outstanding results in the reduction of domestic violence in Normanton. Since the campaign's implementation in March 2007 which coincided with the start of the league season there was a 45 per cent reduction in domestic violence compared to prior years. The slogan was promoted widely on car stickers, TV adverts, wristbands, banners at games and on jerseys of both players and supporters (Spence 2002).

In New Zealand and Australia the 'Rugby League Reads' initiative is an example of the NRL's One Community programme, which aims to respond to key public needs by building strategic partnerships in the areas of health, education and social issues. In particular, 'Rugby League Reads' is an all-year round program that incorporates an online book club and writing competitions for school children. NRL players are an integral part of the programme visiting schools to read books to pupils with NRL Development Officers (One Community 2009). The New Zealand Warriors One Community programme was this year rated the most successful community program in the NRL, with the Warriors winning 'Club of the Year' award for their community work. The 'Warriors against Bullying' and 'Rugby League Reads' initiatives have been rolled out in schools across Auckland.

Youth development and crime prevention

By naming 2005 the International Year of Sport and Physical Education the United Nations sought to highlight their commitment to the idea that sport and development are intrinsically linked, particularly in relation to youth development. It is thus argued that sport is a means for promoting inclusion, providing education, character building and dealing with delinquency and crime (Donnelly, Darnel and Coakley 2007:15, 17).

In Australia the NRL has started to focus on indigenous development targeting youth via its 'Reconciliation Action Plan'. The 'NRL Reconciliation Action Plan' was released in 2008 and is a blueprint for enabling indigenous athletes to make the most of their professional career while at the same time assisting development in indigenous communities through involvement in rugby league. The plan is supported by high profile indigenous players such as Dean Widder and Sam Thiaday who form part of the advisory group. It has been argued by those driving the implementation of this plan that:

> You cannot under estimate how important the game of rugby league is for many indigenous communities
>
> Any NRL players—indigenous or non indigenous who visit a community carries enormous influence over kids
>
> The game brings communities other and also provides a means of sending positive messages to our youth (Australian NRL 2008).

Cunningham and Beneforti (2005:89) argue sport to be an important antidote to boredom and the maladaptive behaviours that occur as a result of it. This idea is further supported by The Royal Commission into Aboriginal death whilst in custody that identified sport and recreation to be important in preventing boredom which may lead to crime in juveniles. Moreover, research evidence suggests that sport and recreation play a part in reducing levels of substance abuse and self harm (Cameron and MacDougall 2001).

Such is the importance of sport and recreation to strengthen communities by supporting youth that an increasing number of indigenous communities have put in place community based sport and recreation officers. Although it does need to be noted, many of the people in these positions are stretched beyond their capacity and suffer burn out quickly (Cunningham and Beneforti 2005:94).

At the beginning of 2009 PNG International Rugby League star and former Melbourne Storm winger Marcus Bai took on the role of ambassador for youth through Yumi Lukautim Mosbi. In Port Moresby, Bai has begun working with raskol (a *Tok Pisin* word derived from English rascal) gangs as a youth ambassador (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2008). Bai's role includes visiting juvenile penitentiaries where young offenders and youth identified as vulnerable to crime are taught life skills.

Other individual players such as PNG's Stanley Gene and indigenous players such as David Peachy and Preston Campbell are not only highly regarded members of the rugby league community but require full acknowledgement for their tireless work with their young people. In particular, David Peachey the former Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks and South Sydney Rabbitohs fullback was awarded the NRL's 'Ken Stephen Medal' for community service in 2003, and was one of the New South Wales finalists in the 2005 'Australian of the Year' competition. These achievements are in recognition of Peachey's work with National Aboriginal Sports Corporation of Australia (NASCA), and a variety of initiatives with the aboriginal community via the 'David Peachey Foundation', established by Peachey in 2004 (Massoud 2007). The Foundation allocates sporting grants to talented indigenous youth and delivers education, health and sports programs in regional and remote indigenous communities throughout Australia. Pacific Island rugby league players have also assisted in community development in areas of England in which they live and play professionally, by promoting cultural awareness and crime prevention amongst youths.

Health promotion and prevention

Using league to address domestic violence and draw attention to the misuse and abuse of alcohol is not only about working to build safer and better communities but is a means for achieving specific health objectives. Another serious health issue in for example PNG is HIV/AIDS and rugby league is being utilised in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Because of their huge popularity and their international profile rugby league players have been utilised in various condom campaigns (Wilde 2007). The PNG National AIDS Council has made sound use of Brad Fittler, the then Kangaroos captain, who at the time was in Port Moresby for a one-off test match against the Papua New Guinea Kumuls, in their television and poster campaigns which focused on the spreading messages about engaging is safe sexual practices (Wilde 2007:68). Fittler, wearing an AIDS stay safe imprinted cap, was quoted as saying: 'To be world champions we need to play hard, but we also play it safe. And in life like in sports, you have to play safe and stay safe from AIDS' (Wilde 2007:59). While the World Champion part is now clearly redundant, the message remains important.

Creation of economic opportunities and poverty alleviation

The UN (nd.) purports that sport contributes to economic development and provides economic opportunities. A healthy population is more productive meaning an increase in economic outputs, while at the same time cutting health care costs (UN nd.:3). Epidemiological evidence also highlights the earlier people make investments in their health, the greater the longer term benefits (WHO 2005; Wilkinson and Marmot 2003). The production of sporting goods, the staging of sporting events and sport related services generates money and creates jobs (Levermore 2007:187-8). Attributes learnt on the sport field and as part of the team makes people more employable (UN nd.). Sport can also be an engine for the local economy when organisations seeks to develop a code of sport in a specific location and in the context of the Pacific the money earned by those who are at the top of their game more often than not finds its way back to the village level via remittance processes or thorough the establishment of, or investment in, local businesses.

The Rugby League World Cup 2008 made a profit of AUS$5 million, the majority of which the Chairman of the Rugby League International Federation, Colin Love, has stated will be channelled into the development of 'emerging' rugby league nations, such as PNG, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji (Jancetic 2008). The idea is that an expanded international programme of rugby league test matches against the 'emerging' rugby league nations, would provide revenue via television rights and gate receipts.

In a joint statement released by the PNG and Australian ministerial forum in August 2008, attention is to be paid to the implementation of a sport package with a specific focus on rugby league and the desire to redevelop the Goroka Sporting Institution into a regional high-altitude sporting institute has been documented (Governments of Australia and PNG 2008: Point 39).

This has since been reiterated with Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia stating his full support for the establishment of a Port Moresby-based team and provision of support with game development, infrastructure and the upgrading of sporting facilities and the stadium. This support is also very much welcomed by PNG Prime Minister and Grand Chief Michael Somare who reports his government will commit twenty million dollars to the project (Heming 2008, Koch 2008). Players, administrators, and fans alike have expressed support for this idea also, as can been

seen in the comment made by Kumuls coach Adrian Lam who has stated his intention to dedicate his life to developing rugby league in PNG.

Where to from here

Fieldwork plans 2009–10

There is much potential in researching the idea of rugby league as a vehicle for development, with a particular focus on PNG and PNG players who are located in Brisbane, Sydney, Hull and PNG. Having received initial funding for the idea, we are planning to undertake fieldwork in September 2009 in the above mentioned places. Early connections have been made with key players and administrators in the league community and those already working in the field of sport and community development. The commitment by the Australian government and AusAid to developing PNG rugby league also offers potential to further this research. There is also a clear commitment by those working in community development in PNG and by those at the grassroots. Given league's influence locally and nationally to develop league in PNG constitutes development.

We would like to leave you with this quote:

> Who says there is a mountain too high to climb and who says a developing economy cannot topple the developed world saturated with all the riches and capabilities in all aspects of the Sporting world. They may have all the money and infrastructure including experience and skills to wage war on us, but our Kumuls are armed to the teeth with the most priceless weapon that money can't buy, and that is the energy-generating chemical substance of the degree of an atomic bomb 'Heart and Soul'. Go Champion Lam go the Champion Kumuls!!! A Proud Papua New Guinean I remain. Best Wishes Comrades!!! (James, Post-Courier PNG 2008).

Conclusion

As identified in the literature the SFD notion is in its infancy and therefore requires ongoing conceptualisation, and debate and research which draws upon case specific primary data (SDP IWG 2007). As shown in this paper one such case example is rugby league in the Pacific. It appears that rugby league players as prominent and respected people are able to reach communities with messages about HIV/AIDs and through the support of national and local rugby league bodies they are also working to achieve community development initiatives such as those seen in the NRL's One Community programme, and tackle youth crime, substance misuse and family violence. This is clear evidence of rugby league's hands on approach to health promotion and prevention, youth development and building safer communities. At a more strategic level the Australian and PNG governments are seeking to work together to develop the game of league because of the economic opportunities that will arise not only for individual players who sign lucrative contracts but at the national level should, for example, the Goroka Sporting Institution be developed into a regional high-altitude sporting institute.

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