

**The Olympic Movement and social responsibility: Organizational best practices which can bring about social change**

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**Socio-cultural  
Session 6**

**Thursday, May 29, 2008  
1:30 PM - 1:55 PM**

**Presentation (25-minute)  
Abstract 327**

Discussions of corporate social responsibility in society are becoming more prevalent. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a concept whereby "companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (Commission on European Communities, 2006, p. 2). Corporate leadership requires responsibility toward society, and good leaders understand role of business in society (Fitzgerald & Cormack, 2007). According to Ruggie (In Nelson, 2004, p.3), "Corporate social responsibility is not only a business challenge. Even more important, it concerns the relationship between business and society." Acting in a socially responsible manner can result in positive social change, and sport organizations have the capacity to do this (Grissmann, 2007).

Just as corporate managers are taking actions regarding CSR and social change, so must sport managers (Babiak, Bradish, Wolfe, Kent, & Johnson, 2007). Burnett and Uys (2000) concluded that sport intervention programs that aim at bringing about social change and development should be measured using three levels of analysis. These are the macro, the meso and the micro levels of the society. The macro level refers to changes in infrastructure, economic resources, socio-economic indicators, policies, and systems that provide opportunities to poor and underprivileged communities. The meso level refers to changes in social networks, inter-group relationships, values, norms, group cohesion, and social integration. Finally, the micro level refers to psychological impacts such as self esteem, perceptions, stereotypes, and empowerment. Burnett and Uys (2000) suggest that such conceptualizations can serve as useful tools to better understand, clarify, and analyze the possible impacts of sport development programs. Such tools can help researchers operationalize change outcomes and provide empirical evidence of the impacts of sport interventions. One segment of the sport industry which has yet to be examined in this area is the Olympic Movement. The Olympic Movement has the potential to bring about positive social change. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss how elements of the Olympic Movement put theory into practice and act in a socially responsible fashion, which can result in bringing about positive social change. Burnett and Uys' (2000) framework will be used to analyze different aspects of the Olympic Movement and illustrate how they are the impetus for social change on the macro, meso, and micro levels.

The modern Olympic Movement was founded on the notion of Olympism, which according to the International Olympic Committee (2007, p. 9) is "a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles." As such, the Olympic Movement has the potential to affect social change through sport. Several entities within the Movement operate in this manner.

First is the International Olympic Academy (IOA). The IOA "functions as a multicultural interdisciplinary centre that aims at studying, enriching and promoting Olympism" (IOA, 2006, p. 6). Using Olympic education as its foundation, the IOA promotes Olympism and its ideals to hundreds of people every year. A second program within the Olympic Movement which advances sport for social change is the IOC's Sport for All Commission. According to the IOC (2007, Sport for All Commission, Mission section), "Sport for All is a movement promoting the Olympic ideal that sport is a human right for all individuals regardless of race, social class and sex. The movement encourages sports activities that can be exercised by people of all ages, both sexes and different social and economic conditions." Next there is Olympic Aid, which became Right to Play. Right To Play seeks "To improve the lives of children in the most disadvantaged areas of the world by using the power of sport and play for development, health and peace" (Right to Play, n.d, Mission). With projects in more than 20 countries primarily in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, Right to Play uses its programming to reach out to children in areas affected by war, conflict, and poverty.

An Olympic Movement partner which has taken steps to use sport to implement social change is the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). During the 2004 Athens Summer Olympic Games, the organization issued a Position Statement of the IPC on Human Rights (IPC, 2004). This was issued in advance of the approval of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This Convention contains Article 30.5 which specifically addresses sport and physical activity as human rights for persons with disabilities (Hums, 2007; Roy, 2007).

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Finally is the Olympic Truce. The concept of the Olympic Truce originated with the Ancient Olympic Games. For a time period before, during, and after the Games, athletes, coaches, fans, and pilgrims to Olympia were allowed to travel safely to and from Olympia. Today, according to the IOC (2007), the Truce acts to "raise awareness and encourage political leaders to act in favour of peace; mobilise youth for the promotion of the Olympic ideals; establish contacts between communities in conflict; and offer humanitarian support in countries at war."

While the Olympic Movement is far from perfect and has been rightfully critiqued for its stance on numerous issues, there are still aspects of the Movement which can and do promote social change. Certainly, more programs and issues could be added to this list. As with any sport related entity, the Olympic Movement faces its share of challenges in operationalizing social responsibility. The notion of Olympism firmly under girds the Olympic Movement; hence the organizational philosophy/mission is in place to promote social responsibility and social change. The Burnett and Uys' (2000) framework provides an excellent method to assess how well the Movement is doing in this regard.