

## **Report of the Flash-debate on Sport, War-trauma and Development**

On Saturday morning, the 24th of June 2006, the day that the Finals of the Triple World Championship volleyball for disabled took place, a lively "Flash-debate on Sport, War-trauma and Development" took place in Roermond, the Netherlands. The debate was organised by COS Limburg (centre for international cooperation) and SPGN (foundation for promotion of sport for Disabled in the Netherlands). Leader of the debate: Mr. W. Vriend, Sondela (sportdevelopment projects). About 30 participants, sport and development organisations from all over the world shared a number of personal experiences and posed critical questions. Countries represented: England, Switzerland, Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Netherlands, Croatia, Canada, Tanzania, Cameroun, Germany, Rwanda, Poland and Portugal. For a number of participants in this debate, sport related war-trauma and development was a relatively new topic. It was a multicultural and concise meeting. A brief summary of the outcome of the debate:

### **What is the power of sport?**

Sport can be a tool for reconciliation, for uniting people, a way of getting people to understand each other. Once people are integrated in society (through sport), it is easy to contribute in (economic) development. Above all, sport gives good self-esteem and it protects people from bad behaviour. Playing sport means you have to take care of yourself.

### **Is sport a medicine for trauma?**

Yes, because people start talking with each other about the past, after a long time. After a traumatic experience, you are isolated from the rest of the community, through sports this can come out. Important is that through team spirit (friendship) sport can be a medicine. In order that sports can be a medicine for disabled, we must give the medicine very early. It has to be used in the primary schools. We should all push sports for everybody, both abled and disabled.

### **What are the critical succesfactors to have traumatised people participating in sports?**

Sport can unite people, but what does it take to get the people together? With volleyball, is it that simple to get a net and a ball and start? There are many people who don't see the point in playing sports if your life is somehow lost? It is hard to convince somebody just with talking to do something that will be better for him. Sometimes you have to grab somebody and just start.

### **Remarks:**

- In the case of World championships, players are privileged. Many children cannot join or play sports. In many countries there are no sources available.
- "You don't have to be a good player to enjoy sports. It gives self-esteem, which is important."
- It should be the other way around: a healthy person should integrate with disabled persons, in order to get back in society. Sitting volleyball can have this.
- Sport has an important cultural aspect, this should also be shared. Traditional games should be used, why sitting volleyball, if there is an other sport?
- NGO's don't have enough attention to sport in general. They don't always really know what has been achieved.
- Around sport events, sometimes there is too much money wasted, in for example travel expenses.
- Government could stimulate sports for all people by introducing Mass-sport. When the offices close, everybody has to participate. It takes time to stimulate the entire population.
- There are many similarities between Developed and developing countries.
- It is not that important to 'own the podium', but we have to support in other parts of the world to rehabilitate.
- Sport is a good tool after war. But still it can also be maintained a weapon!

This debate was held, due to the efforts of the NCDO, the Dutch organisation for sustainable development, who made it possible for the Rwandese team to participate in the World Championship volleyball for disabled.

### **More information:**

[www.sportdevelopment.org](http://www.sportdevelopment.org)  
<http://www.sportanddev.org>  
[www.sondela.nl](http://www.sondela.nl)  
[www.coslimburg.nl](http://www.coslimburg.nl) (dutch)