

SPORT

IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

AN IBERO-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE



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RESPONSE

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SPORT

IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

AN IBERO-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Prof. Fernando Cáceres Andrés



With the support of:



Executive Summary

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of sport systems, but it has also revealed their strengths and potentials. There are extraordinary opportunities for sport to emerge strengthened and renewed from this pandemic, and to provide better development conditions for communities and countries.

Mandatory or voluntary isolation has clearly exposed the importance of physical activity, exercise and healthy habits to sustain a healthy life and maintain a physical, intellectual and emotional balance. The social and political re-signification of the relevance and irreplaceable role of physical activity and sport in the full development of the human being is a challenge for the sport world and a need for society.

By losing socialization spaces, children, the elderly, women, and persons with disabilities are among the groups most affected by the suspension of activities, and run the risk of being neglected in reactivation plans, support programs and direct future assistance. These sectors should have direct representation in decision-making spaces to avoid this extreme situation and to increase the likelihood that new policies are sensitive to their concerns. Government, Olympic and sport movement authorities in general should ensure such representation.

Women have a significant impact on sport. Reactivation is impossible without women playing a leading role. There is an inversely proportional relationship between gender and leadership: the higher the hierarchical and management level in sport entities, the lower the number of

women. Governments should be vigilant against gender-based discrimination and should ensure equal opportunities for men and women. Sport organizations should foster gender equality by word and by deed.

National sport authorities could leverage this newfound closeness with other national and local actors, to encourage permanent cooperation and dialogue and to take on new commitments with their local and regional peers at the second and third levels of government.

This is an exceptionally favorable time to reshape the relationship between governments and the Olympic movement, the business world, and the scientific and academic field, steering them towards a more rational and collaborative policy.

Responses to the pandemic are most effective when they are multisectoral and consensual. These conditions may prevail and be institutionalized if they agree with the strategic thinking of a new culture of governance.

Sport is often characterized as informal and contingent, even at the professional level. Assuming obligations and adopting rigorous protocols is a very important step in the formalization of sport and, if incorporated and developed as a regular practice, it could add value to institutional strengthening, management professionalization and the follow-up and monitoring of goals and obligations.

Forced by the public health crisis, a detailed survey, analysis and information classification has been carried out. There can be no sustainable

management without the support and the bedrock of information.

Formalizing sport demands evidence-based management and decision-making processes. Thus, sport management requires greater academic support.

Changes in the workplace have been decisive since the outbreak of the pandemic, and sport is no stranger to them: a greater use of technology, an expansion of remote working and the spread of distance learning. Online physical activity and training programs which can be enjoyed at home or in fit and safe environments can favor the most vulnerable and excluded sectors (women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly), as long as access to technology is ensured. This is a great collaboration opportunity for specialized institutions.

The outbreak of the pandemic has exposed the importance of the role of the State, providing universal and efficient public services, and of organized communities. It has also shown that the most effective measures are multisectoral, consensual, and supported by international cooperation. There is a virtuous relationship between actions based on national unity and social cohesion and better results.

The pandemic should help show that collaboration is the only way to address a systemic challenge, and the world of sport cannot be oblivious to this fact.

Foreword

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed not only a health crisis, but a global social and economic crisis, in which sport, physical activity and physical education have been particularly affected.

One consequence of this crisis is the suspension of national and international sport events. Many Latin American countries have restricted the sport activities of citizens, while sport centers have been adapted as makeshift hospitals, and several athletes and technical personnel have lost their jobs.

Furthermore, as is the case in all crises, biases and structural inequalities particularly affecting traditionally excluded populations, especially the most vulnerable, have been laid bare.

The pandemic has forced authorities to make radical decisions such as, for example, postponing the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, but it has also underscored the importance of physical activity and sport in our countries and for society.

Governments, international organizations, leagues, clubs, and even professional athletes and coaches, made a special appeal for the promotion of physical activity during the strictest moments of lockdown.

Various creative online strategies have been developed to help people take care of their physical, mental, and emotional health. In turn, in Latin America, countries enforcing strict lockdowns have exceptionally allowed outdoor sport under strict safety protocols.

This whole situation has posed a major challenge for governments, demanding urgent contingency

plans tailored to the evolving path of the pandemic. In this context, in late May 2020, UNESCO, the Ibero-American Sports Council (CID) and SEGIB, organized the 1st Conference of Ministers and High Authorities for Sports in Ibero-America: Sports in time of Pandemic. This virtual conference sought to offer a forum for Ibero-American governments, international organizations and sport organizations to share their action plans for sport in the face of the pandemic and to coordinate collaboration strategies.

On that occasion, governments repeated their call for international cooperation, proposing the expansion of experience-sharing spaces. In addition, they shared their experiences with the aim of producing inputs for better decision-making to address the pandemic, both now and in the future.

In light of this call made by the government representatives of the Ibero-American countries, from UNESCO and the Ibero-American Sports Council (CID), in a spirit of cooperation and the willingness to continue fostering sport and its relevance for coexistence and sustainable development within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the Kazan Action Plan, prompted the decision to offer a technical input aimed at informing and strengthening sport policies, during and after the pandemic.

Accordingly, this document identifies the main responses to COVID-19 in the field of sport in the region. In particular, it seeks to present a series of opportunities and recommendations for sport to come forth a better and stronger sector, and to consolidate itself as a catalyst for inclusion and development, especially during crises.

We trust that this document will be a useful tool not only for Ibero-American governments, but also for the sport movement, international organizations, the sport industry, sport for development organizations, and all those interested in the impact of the pandemic on sport and the opportunities which can be seized.

UNESCO and CID reaffirm their commitment to continue working with all countries of the region and the sport community in the quest for innovative tools and proposals, and firmly believe that cooperation and teamwork are key to facing this common challenge.

01.

Background

This report is part of a long-standing collaboration between the Ibero-American Sports Council (CID) and UNESCO.

Over the years, the frequent participation of Ibero-American government sport representatives in meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sports (CIGEPS), the International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials in charge of Physical Education and Sports (MINEPS) and other regional and subregional meetings, contributed to the coming together of these two institutions and the gradual identification of common strategic areas of interest, subject to joint approaches and actions.

This history of joint work enabled UNESCO and CID to promptly assist and respond to the demands of the Latin American countries in the face of the impact of COVID-19 in the region.

In late May 2020, both institutions, with the collaboration of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), convened Ministers and High Authorities for Sport to the First Ibero-American Conference of Sport and COVID-19, with the participation of government officials from the region and important international organizations linked to the sector¹.

The interventions and the opinions expressed by the governments showed the need for greater cooperation and assistance between countries and their international partners.

This document seeks to provide information on the situation and the actions taken by the different Ibero-American countries to address the outbreak and development of the pandemic in the region, as well as to identify opportunities and make recommendations.



¹ <https://es.unesco.org/news/iberoamerica-acuerda-crear-plataforma-internacional-cooperacion-enfrentar-al-covid-deporte>

02.

National Responses to COVID-19

Overall Framework

The world is currently facing an unexpected event, as a consequence of the outbreak of a previously unknown disease caused by a virus with an extraordinary speed of infection.

Despite the many epidemics and pandemics suffered by humanity, the emergence of such a virus in a globalized, intercommunicated world has surprised national and international health authorities, who had to elicit immediate responses with scarce information and no prior knowledge.

This problem was acknowledged while measures were already being taken. Consequently, a better understanding of the disease, the ongoing assessment of the facts, and the identification of effective measures and instruments gradually helped improve the quality of information and strengthen response capabilities.

As the virus initially spread in Europe and arrived in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) later on, the region enjoyed a relative advantage, with an interesting accumulation of information and knowledge that helped take some anticipatory measures. However, unlike Europe, state capacity in Latin America and the Caribbean is less consolidated and is marked by inadequate health infrastructure, services, and resources, political instabilities and institutional weaknesses, struggling national economies, and objective limitations to increase public spending.

In this context, both in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Iberian Peninsula, sport, in its broadest sense, grew and developed gradually but steadily, gaining relevance in the public eye.

This strength improved authorities' capacity for dialogue and placed sport under the spotlight thanks to its impact on the healthy living conditions and the integral development of the population.

Early Responses

In general, the first reactions of the LAC governments were unilateral, with a tendency toward coordination and seeking common responses.

National responses varied according to each country's characteristics and possibilities, ranging from the imposition of total or almost total lockdowns with controlled individual isolation, to direct appeals to the population to exercise its freedom responsibly.

Given this diversity, it is worth noting that this study will attempt to present a synthesis based on the main similarities shared by most countries.

From the outset, the highest government authorities took a leading role in the crisis, particularly through the joint action of presidents and ministries of health, accompanied and assisted by ministries of economy.

At a second level, scientific advisory teams (governmental, public-private, or independent)

were set up to provide professional support for healthcare decision-making and to assist crisis committees or *ad hoc* teams.

The sport movement, for its part, was taking its own decisions, following the guidelines and governing resolutions adopted by national or local governments.

In this context, government authorities called on the three categories of sport institutions for consultation, dialogue and proposal-making, according to the peremptory nature of the cases.

Although pressed by a demand for immediate responses to urgent situations, governments were respectful of the independence of the sport movement and, under this premise, good levels of understanding were reached.

As the relationship between governments and the sport movement is usually complex, measures agreed upon in the context of the crisis have not only contributed to overcoming the difficulties, but also open a better path for coexistence and cooperation to overcome this crisis and for the future development of sport.

First Sport-Related Measures Taken in the Face of the Pandemic

The first government measures aimed at avoiding crowds and facilitating social distancing, both in sport and in other spheres of civic life:

- Partial postponement and, later on, cancellation of sport events and competitions, closure of public and private sport facilities, and interruption of recreational and team sports in most countries.

- Reinforced hygiene, cleaning and disinfection measures for sport facilities and equipment.
- Interruption of training programs for qualification in international competitions and reassessment of financial aid commitments, particularly those regarding the Olympic cycle.
- Repatriation of athletes temporarily residing, training or competing in foreign countries.
- Planning a step-by-step process to contain the spread of the virus and to guide a gradual return to activity.
- Widespread imposition of protocols to allow the restart of activities, and specific devices to respond to extraordinary situations.
- Communication strategies to inform the population and raise awareness of the health crisis, its impact on sport, and the specific contribution the sector can make to help mitigate the consequences of the crisis, fostering codes of conduct to curb the spread of the virus.
- Special mention must be made of the motivational campaigns which sought to encourage and give hope to the world of sport and to the population at large, with the participation and active commitment of national and world-famous sport personalities.
- Physical activity and healthy eating campaigns, streamed via mobile devices or posted in official platforms and social networks, with permanent or temporary professional workers.
- Government sport institutes and sport entities went above and beyond their natural obligations and joined the health, food and social support networks by opening their facilities for the operation of makeshift hospitals, shelters, canteens, or immunization and information service centers.

Government Measures for Resuming Activities

Although there have been common patterns in the spread of the pandemic and some formal similarities in countries' responses to it, each country was ultimately facing the crisis from the starting point of its own social and cultural singularities and based on its own capabilities and timing.

In countries that promptly imposed lockdowns and strictly limited activities, physical activity was restricted to the domestic sphere. In other countries, where gradual and flexible measures were adopted, physical activity was also authorized in open public spaces, respecting physical distancing rules.

In countries with strong professional sport sectors, federations and leagues replaced their early reluctance to paralysis and acknowledged the need to adapt to government criteria. At the same time, they took steps to mitigate the economic impact derived from the standstill, rescheduled events, and developed plans to resume activities.

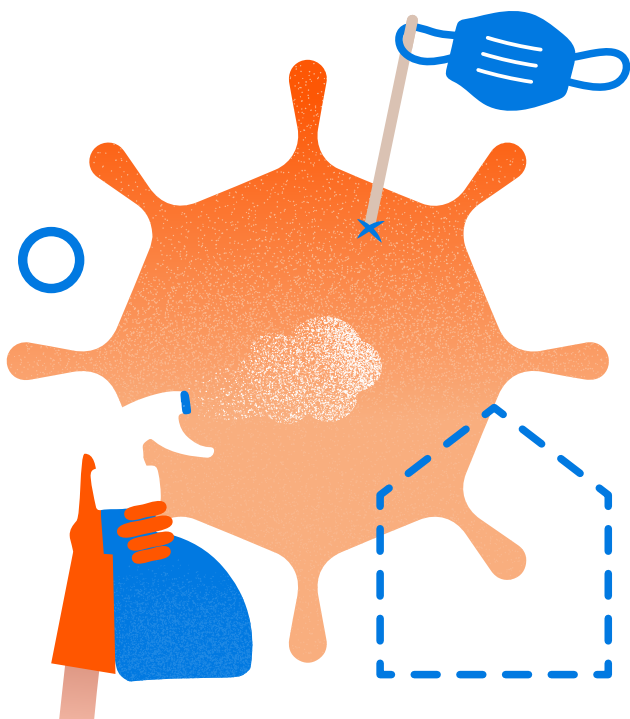
In these cases, postponing anticipated economic income given their existing contractual obligations, led to considerable friction and difficulties.

In the case of amateur sport, often dependent on direct financial aid from the State, dialogue and agreement took place under more favorable conditions.

As to the interruption and reactivation decisions, not all sport disciplines chose the same path. Team sports were resumed later than individual sports, and each country designed and implemented its measures in different ways.

It is worth noting that the process was based on a common spirit of dialogue and consensus. Some of the measures taken in the region were:

- Adapting health standards and provisions stipulated by the Ministries of Health for the regulation of sport, recreation and physical activity for the gradual return to activity.
- Opening of dialogue channels and joint work spaces with clubs, federations and gyms to develop protocols by discipline and branch of activity, to regulate a gradual return to institutional functioning and sporting activities.
- Temporary or permanent roundtables to foster agreements between different government agencies, and between these agencies and private entities.
- Personalized expert advice and support suitable for the needs of athletes, to guide training in isolation, provide special nutritional support programs, and contribute to the emotional wellbeing of the athletes.
- Mechanisms for the delivery of sport equipment and materials to ensure training routines, at home or in previously authorized safe and isolated places.
- Strengthening pre-existing financial aid programs for athletes and coaches, through scholarships or additional temporary compensation schemes.



- Emergency financial aid programs for clubs, granting fixed or flexible subsidies, depending on the social importance of the activity and its contribution to the community.
- Suspension of service interruptions or more flexible payment terms for utilities (electricity, gas, water), telephone, and internet services. In some cases, temporary payment exemptions were introduced.
- Social security contributions deferral or discounts for sport clubs and federations.
- Easier payment terms for financial obligations of sport institutions with public bodies and some private entities.
- Online training and education programs for athletes, club and federation leaders, and municipal and provincial government staff, on topics such as gender equality, adapted sports, institutional strengthening, and science and technology applied to sport.
- Fundraising campaigns for vulnerable athletes and their families.
- Invitation to participate in forums to exchange ideas and develop general guidelines to promote the economic revitalization of sport as each planned stage is overcome.

These responses, swiftly implemented and generally agreed upon by various actors (public and private, private and institutional, and national and international), underscores the opportunity for dialogue and the potential and projections of national sport systems.

The institutionalization of sport in various local, provincial and national government bodies gave legitimacy and provided opportunities for dialogue and proximity to the sport movement and to the general population.

Similarly, the organized sport movement served as a solid counterpart that validated and implemented decisions, organizing citizen participation and assistance during the emergency.

It is important to underscore that, in spite of the systemic weaknesses of the sector, the sudden outbreak of the health crisis activated underutilized or idle cooperation and governance capacities.

The crisis has generated negative lasting effects, but it has also revealed opportunities hidden behind the veil of normality, now partially shattered.

03.

Origins and Evolution of the Concept of Sport

Modern sport, the product of a process of transformation of games and hobbies, has become one of the most significant contemporary cultural expressions. It occupies a preeminent place in the show business and entertainment industry, but it has also pervaded society and coexists in people's homes and daily lives.

Sport has become a multidimensional social fact in which numerous agents interact and involving transcendent areas for human life. Not only has it gained public attention, it has also earned a position in the political agenda. Above all, sport has long overcome an instrumental and ancillary conception, and is nowadays conceived as a constantly evolving agent of development.

A clear expression of this process can be seen in the inclusion of sport in the constitutions of several countries of the region.

The first references appear immediately after the end of World War II and still express this concept of sport as a complement, a tool that contributes to other spheres of human life.

According to Karel Luis Pachot Zambrana² this first period can be described as one of *"indirect systematization of sport,"* and it lasted until 1968. Pachot explains that, in this early period, constitutions *"began to refer to the harmonious and integral dimension of public education, which included physical education, and sport came to be understood as a means for its development. In so*

doing, we should also accept that the constitutional approach to sport was still hesitant, so that it cannot be adequately inferred that there was any intention to properly incorporate sport. Following these guidelines, the Panamanian Constitution of 1946 (Article 77), the Vietnamese Constitution of 1959 (Article 35), and, later on, the Uruguayan (Article 71) and Paraguayan (Article 98) Constitutions, both promulgated in 1967, recognized the essential duty of the State to ensure an education that includes, among others, a physical dimension. For their part, the Yugoslav Constitution of 1963 (Article 56) and the Panamanian Constitution of 1972 (Article 82) used the term "physical culture" (the former, with respect to the right to the protection of human health, and the latter with regard to culture,) as one of the specific material guarantees of their respective aims, a term that, moreover, can be interpreted as including sport".³

Sport was explicitly mentioned for the first time in a constitution in 1968, when it was integrated into several articles of the constitution of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), which marked the transition from a period of "indirect systematization" to one of "direct systematization" of sport.

The explicit mention of sport in a constitutional text was an important step that evinced a change, but this was still inadequate to show the profound significance of the contemporary phenomenon of sport. It points to the mandatory obligation of the State to encourage, promote, and protect sport, by itself or when applied to other public purposes. Sport was not yet considered a right.

² "El derecho constitucional al deporte en la doctrina y el derecho comparado," Karel Luis Pachot Zambrana. Juris Doctor and Lecturer of general theory of the state and constitutional law.

³ Ibid.

During the 1970s, the inclusion of sport in the Ibero-American constitutions in this same spirit became widespread.

The European Charter for Sport for All (Brussels, 1975)⁴ marked the passage from a vision of sport as instrumental and ancillary, to a higher concept which acknowledges its intrinsic value. The first two articles of the Charter treat sport as a right and as a lever for human development.

Both concepts were adopted by and enshrined in the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport (UNESCO), adopted in 1978 and revised in 2015.

These documents represent a turning point in the evolution of the concept of sport. Even if clearly declarative and non-binding for Member States, they paved the way for the emergence of a more significant, higher concept of sport.

Other important milestones were the 2003 report of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, and UN Resolution 58/5 (2003), which proclaims 2005 as the “International Year for Sport and Physical Education.” The UN makes the following recommendations:

1. *Incorporate sport and physical activity into the development agenda of countries as well as of national and international development agencies, with a particular emphasis on young people.*
2. *Include the opportunity to participate in sport as an objective as well as a tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of other international conferences and the broader aims of development and peace.*

⁴ *European Sport for All Charter* (Brussels, 1975).

Article I: Every individual shall have the right to participate in sport.

Article II: Sport shall be encouraged as an important factor in human development and appropriate support shall be made available out of public funds.

3. *Include sport-related initiatives into the programmes of UN agencies, where appropriate and according to locally assessed needs.*
4. *Facilitate the development of innovative partnerships involving sport for development.*
5. *Urge governments to identify and make available resources for sports initiatives that maximise participation in and access to ‘sport for all’ within their own countries, and sport-for-development programmes within overseas development assistance, and to strengthen the position of sport and physical activity in policy development generally. Also urge UN system partners, including the private sector, sports organizations and civil society, to generate in-kind and financial support for sport for development and peace.*
6. *Encourage the UN system to seek new and innovative ways to use sport for communication and social mobilization at national, regional and local levels.*⁵

In the same vein, the Office for the International Year of Sport and Physical Education (Education, Health, Development, Peace) issued a document confirming the value of the sport for development and observing that the main aim of the Year was to underscore the fundamental contribution of sport and physical education towards the achievement of the global development goals (United Nations, 2005).

In 2015, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals mark another step in recognizing the value of sport. Although none of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals explicitly mention sport, the resolution adopting the 2030 Agenda acknowledges the “growing contribution

⁵ Recommendations adapted from the United Nations Secretary-General’s report, *Sport for Development and Peace: Towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals*.

of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives.”⁶

The International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (2015) and the conclusions of MINEPS VI, the 6th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, which adopted the Kazan Action Plan, have helped consolidate this trend, positioning sport at the highest political levels for nations and societies.

Alongside this institutional journey, sport began establishing itself in citizen life, both at the individual and collective levels. A process of social and territorial expansion took place under various types of associations, but particularly with the sport club. Sport associations were created and developed by the private sector, in the free and active exercise of citizenship.

The influence of sport entities in their communities also grew and evolved. These institutions build identity, inspire a sense of belonging, foster peaceful coexistence, and promote organized citizen participation driven by values such as respect for others and unity in diversity.

In Ibero-America, sport organizations strengthen inclusion and social integration. From the least developed to large-scale professional sport bodies, sport organizations build meaningful relationships with their environments, interacting with various economic, political, social and education agents.

Today, sport is the most relevant forum for socialization driven by private, free and voluntary initiative.

Absent that support network of sport organizations, the consequences of the crisis would be more severe.

Without this fabric, woven by the citizens themselves, socio-economic reactivation would not be sustainable.

The pandemic is still raging, bringing about serious effects and harsh social and economic consequences for our countries. Moreover, other pandemics might unfortunately be in the cards.

Naturally, sport has also been directly affected by this crisis and is suffering very severe consequences.

The pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of sport systems, but it has also revealed their strength and potential.

Extraordinary opportunities have emerged for sport not only to rebuild itself, but also to go beyond the mere recovery of the previous order, emerging strengthened and internally renewed, and to contribute to improve the development conditions of communities and countries.

But the most significant opportunity lies in supporting this progress in the conceptualization of sport, giving it its proper value and position in forums of higher incidence, and putting it at the service of a new reality, under better conditions of equality.

⁶ *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, UN Res. A/RES/70/1, adopted on September 25th, 2015.

04.

Challenges and Opportunities⁷

1

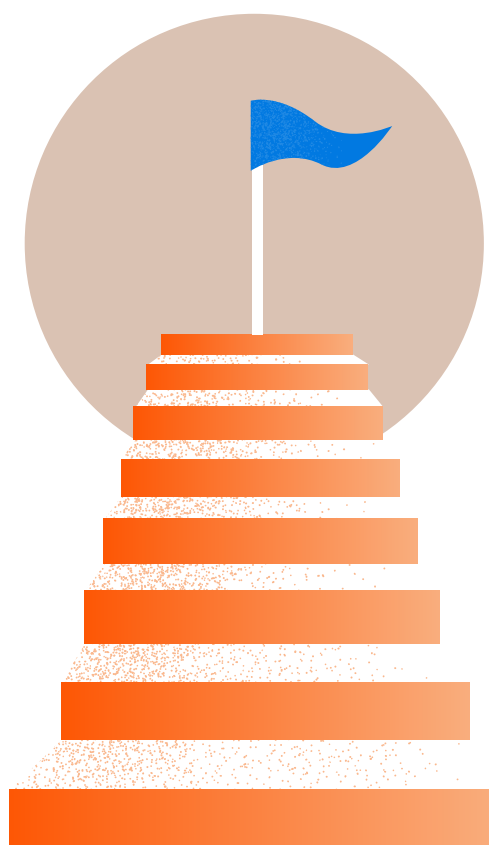
By virtue of this progress, the pandemic finds sport in a phase of remarkable consolidation.

If we treat sport as a right and an agent of development, the first challenge and the main opportunity to underscore is the need to consolidate sport's sociocultural position, political relevance and impact on citizen life in the Ibero-American countries.

The importance given to sport is reflected in the order of precedence it has in the path to reactivation and in the volume of financial assistance and institutional support received during the crisis and in subsequent stages.

Government sport organizations and the sport movement should take up this challenge in unity of purpose and action. The more or less priority sport is given during the transition forebodes the place sport will have in the immediate future.

The context of the crisis provides the opportunity to foster sport in the first levels of public attention and in the political agenda, changing its conceptualization as a mere instrument and adjunct, to recognize its value and to integrate it into State policies.



⁷ Preliminary clarification. The reality of Ibero-American sport is naturally heterogeneous. When making recommendations and pointing out opportunities, we need to set apart the cases of Portugal and Spain, whose own development and supranational integration processes establish differences vis-à-vis Latin America and the Caribbean. Faced with the onslaught of the pandemic, in contrast with Latin America and the Caribbean, in Europe responses have been more collective and uniform by virtue of its regional integration, and the definitions adopted in documents and commitments have been taken as a body. In Latin America and the Caribbean, it is also possible to recognize different realities by virtue of specific national characteristics, levels of development and economic opportunities, among other variables.

2

A positive outcome of the previous challenge will enable sport to establish itself (if it has not yet succeeded; otherwise, to consolidate itself) at the highest levels of government, gaining recognition and a voice within and without the State. It is an opportunity to legitimize sport's dialogue with public and private actors, asserting its peculiar value and its specific contributions to crisis management strategies and in the ensuing reactivation process.

The sport movement usually acts on its own initiative to tackle situations threatening inclusion and solidarity. Faced with the first consequences of the pandemic, sport organizations promptly responded by putting their capacities and resources at the service of their communities, acting as a liaison between government agencies and the community.

This approach goes beyond an instrumental and ancillary vision of sport and considers that its main contribution is not that of serving other purposes.

Instead, sport renders a service to society and to human beings both in contexts of crisis and of normality, assuming joint commitments that far exceed its direct responsibilities, but which essentially meet the purposes of its nature.

3

The pandemic has completely affected people's lives, so immediate responses and exit strategies should take this into account. The complexity of the

current situation leaves no margin for simplistic or reductionist analyses.

However necessary, economic responses are insufficient. Sociocultural conditions for coexistence have also been affected by the suspension of activities and, fundamentally, by physical distancing and mandatory or voluntary isolation.

Thus, in all exit strategies economic revival should be deemed as important as the social, cultural and sport dimensions. Both are part of the same reality.

Sociocultural and sport reactivation enable the sustainable development of the economy, and, in turn, requires specific economic measures to ensure its own sustainability.

Indeed, arguing that all exit strategies for the sport sector should include political, institutional and economic support programs that are as strong (or even stronger) than those implemented during the crisis is legitimate.

4

Mandatory or voluntary isolation has revealed the importance of physical activity, exercise and healthy habits to sustain a healthy life, in physical, intellectual and emotional balance.

Under the current exceptional conditions, there is an invaluable opportunity to socially and politically re-signify the relevance and irreplaceable role of physical activity and sport in the integral development of the human being.

To this end, governments are responsible for leveraging this opportunity, with the necessary involvement of the sport movement in all its organized expressions.

5

Disruptive crises can result in backwardness and a return to previous orders. Not infrequently, they cause setbacks to the progress achieved and devastating damage for the weakest and most vulnerable sectors.

Sport remains ostensibly masculine, despite sustained efforts and real progress in gender equality due to public policies and private initiatives in the field of sport. Sport also tends not to focus particularly on the most vulnerable sectors or to include them in its participation spaces.

By losing socialization spaces, children, the elderly, women and persons with disabilities are among the groups most affected by the suspension of activities. Furthermore, they run the risk of being neglected in reactivation plans and direct future assistance.

Although still far from satisfactory, real progress made in terms of opportunities, rights recognition, and quality conditions for the practice of sport, all important achievements, is being affected and could experience a setback if actions and special programs do not focus on these sectors.

The sudden loss of socialization, inclusion and social integration spaces can be more damaging than the brutal economic impact of the crisis, which affects society at large but particularly hits sectors

that are most vulnerable to rights violation.

Today, and particularly after the shaping of the new reality, assisting these sectors is critical to avoid setbacks that could deepen inequalities and exclusion.

To this end, it is essential to ensure that these sectors are represented in decision-making forums. Consulting these groups and, better yet, delegating participation in decision-making improves the likelihood that new policies will be sensitive to their concerns.

The United Nations has eloquently asserted that policies that do not consult vulnerable sectors or include them in decision-making “are simply less effective, and can even do harm”⁸

Here, the risks also offer an opportunity to reinforce progress and establish a solid foundation to overcome the crisis on more equitable terms.

An equitable development of sport constitutes an essential part of the sociocultural, political and economic strength of our societies.

A new, emerging social order should ensure safe and secure environments for the most vulnerable men and women athletes.

Women have a significant impact on sport. Reactivation is impossible without women playing a leading role. There is an inversely proportional relationship between gender and leadership: the higher the hierarchical and management level in sport entities, the lower the number of

⁸ United Nations, 2020. Policy Brief: “The Impact of COVID-19 on Women”.

women. At the same time, it is mostly women who support the involvement and continuity of children and teenagers in sport. The involvement and support of mothers, sisters, and female relatives and neighbors is key in the early stages of sport development.

Failure to acknowledge this evidence jeopardises the roads to reactivation and may consolidate

and strengthen inequalities. To avoid these risks, concerted action between government agencies and sport organizations is key.

Governments should be vigilant against gender-based discrimination and ensure equal opportunities for men and women. Sport organizations should foster gender equality by word and by deed.

04.

Recommendations

Before presenting a list of specific recommendations, it should be noted that the process of acknowledging the new reality, analyzing it and responding to the spread of COVID-19 and the global outbreak of the pandemic has been "active", while it has taken place in parallel with the unfolding of events. Hence, the following recommendations are subject to the corrections and reinterpretations of an ongoing learning path.

Mainstreaming of Sport Policies

Roundtables and commissions bringing together ministries of education, health, and social development, among others, that seek to analyze, design and implement joint actions in an emergency situation, are a pillar that validates comprehensive policy coordination and formulation for the sport sector and the population at large.

Any measure meant to address an exceptional situation usually comes to an end when this crisis is overcome.

The challenge is to provide lasting value to institutional instruments created to deal with a contingency but capable of operating beyond it, be they similar or different to their initial formulation.

It is important to validate all efforts toward mainstreaming, a practice frequently so elusive to the exercise of government, which tends to fragmentation.

Stable Coordination between Government Levels

A crisis calls for and simplifies the opening of dialogue and coordination spaces, usually blocked under the previous order.

In the current context, the special circumstances generated by the health emergency have called

for a better relationship between the different levels of government, to unify information and regulations, and also for the joint implementation of direct measures.

Relationships between government levels (local, provincial, and national) are not always homogeneous or stable. The exceptional circumstances generated by the pandemic brought together government bodies and contributed to joint work where it was hitherto scarce, while invigorating reciprocity where there was already such a predisposition.

National sport authorities could leverage this newfound closeness to encourage permanent cooperation and dialogue and to take on new commitments with their local and regional peers.

A New Partnership for a New Culture of Governance

The crisis offers a fertile ground to develop a new governance pact or alliance between the strategic partners of sport.

Governance is considered here as the search for balance between the State and organized society, as a platform for agreements based on the rights and obligations of the parties, and as a principle for the establishment of a new political culture of sport.

This new culture of governance encompasses all expressions of the sport movement, but it also includes other public (government institutes and their internal areas) and private actors (business

sector, academic institutions, and other citizen organizations and associations).

We are witnessing exceptionally favorable circumstances for the reshaping of the relationships between governments and the Olympic movement, the business world, and the scientific and academic field, steering them towards a more rational and collaborative policy.

Relationship between the State and the Sport Movement

The relationship with the three categories of sport organizations should be reviewed and reshaped, leveraging the favorable aspects of the current circumstances.

A new culture of governance means consciously accepting the rights and obligations of each party.

The sport movement bears the responsibility of promoting, organizing and developing sport under equitable conditions, safeguarding the value of fair play, and protecting the integrity of the athletes and of the game itself.

The State undertakes to provide financial assistance to sport, facilitate access to information and public services, support national and international activities, protect public health, and ensure compliance with regulations.

Together with each party's rights and obligations, a common field for the formulation of strategic development plans for sport should be added, subject to rigorous criteria for reviewing results and management performance, and using public and private funds with transparency and responsibility.

These temporary commitments, which have been motivated by the current crisis, should encourage both parties to take on long-term responsibilities with strategic value for the development of sport.

This applies to the sport movement in general and to governance conditions between governments and Olympic committees in particular.

The pandemic not only led to the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, but will also affect future Games. The decision entailed dismantling training plans and competition and classification programs, apart from affecting the Olympic cycle.

It was not only the Olympic movement that was affected by this postponement. It has also had an impact on governments' plans and the commercial strategies of the brands involved.

A more consistent dialogue between the parties is necessary, in order to respond in unison and to project and prevent adverse situations in the future.

Responses to the pandemic are most effective when they are multisectoral and consensual. These conditions may prevail and be institutionalized if they agree with the strategic thinking of a new culture of governance.

Formalizing and Professionalizing Sport Management

Sport is often characterized as informal and contingent, even at the professional level.

Regarding sport management, decision-making processes show inconsistencies due to a lack of rigorous and complete information, failure to comply with prior consultation, and a lack of clear regulations.

The health crisis has forced all parties to develop protocols and comply with procedures and schedules in order to fulfill commitments.

Assuming obligations and adopting rigorous protocols is a very important step in the formalization of sport and, if incorporated and developed as a regular practice, it could add value to institutional strengthening, management professionalization and the follow-up and monitoring of goals and obligations.

In a first stage, it may be convenient to focus on protocols for material and operational needs, such as hygiene and health conditions, accessibility and safety, administration, equipment, use of spaces, and capacities. In particular, it would be interesting to find inspiration in some of the principles of the social hygiene movement, which was very influential in the sport development models of many countries in the region.

In subsequent stages, it would be advisable for protocols to include the institutional field, relationships and agreements between the government and sport organizations, and commitments between private agents.

Adopting International Protocols

International sport is an intense and constant activity. It significantly contributes to domestic and international tourism, including the travel schedules of delegations participating in training programs, in competitions or large events, and also in exhibitions, fairs and conventions.

The interruption of international air, sea, and land traffic led to significant revisions in service conditions, and the return to activity will include important changes involving also the world of sport. In turn, sport should reshape the international participation and travel conditions of the delegations to comply with the relevant protocols.

Sport delegations traveling around the world are at high risk of infection and spread of the disease. Therefore, developing new systems and plans for national and international travel for sport delegations which take these risks into account and is flexible enough to adapt to potentially changing circumstances, is a challenge that requires the participation of various government and sport actors.

Furthermore, sharing all available information on the successes and failures of these mechanisms and protocols around the world is key for their constant improvement.

Rigorous Information and Input of Academia

In the field of sport, and particularly in Latin America, access and availability of rigorous, adequate, up-to-date and consistent information is lacking.

Forced by the public health crisis, a detailed survey, analysis and information classification has been carried out. There can be no sustainable management without the support and the bedrock of information.

In order to formalize sport, management and decision-making processes should be based on solid databases.

Reliable data helps create records and analyze processes, essential conditions for the adoption of sustainable decisions and for the sound progress of sport.



In this regard, governance agreements between the authorities and the sport movement should promote a reliable and smooth flow of information on the sector.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the contribution of academia has been equally important.

The relationship between academia and sport is not as smooth and close as it could be. The rapid pace of government, as well as the contingency and immediacy of sport results, cannot always be reconciled with academia's time for reflection and long-term perspectives. Management formalization and professionalization processes require support from academia.

Just as the crisis enabled a reappraisal of sport, it has also bolstered the importance of the view and the contribution of academia. In this sense, assistance and cooperation agreements could be reached between sport and universities and research centers, in broad fields of common interest.

A research area that could help bolster the position of the sector is sport economy and its impact on national and regional economies. The lack of sound information obscures sport's economic strength, generating jobs and genuine resources. In this regard, steps must be taken at the country level in order to make a regional diagnosis.

In the process of formalization of sport in general, there is also an opportunity to adjust award systems, validate non-systematic and informal learning, and add training and continuing education programs for coaches.

In many cases, early responses to the isolation and social distance conditions forced by the pandemic turned to the human resources available, individuals with very diverse levels of training and education.

Efforts to organize and regularize this group will help increase the human resources available by acknowledging, validating and certifying the knowledge of individuals who were not able to obtain a formal degree, and allow the professional practice of advanced students who are able and willing.

In short, training its human resources, providing objective classification criteria, categorizing functions, and shaping databases and records will contribute to the formalization of the sector and will improve the coverage rates of public and private services.

By bringing together governments, the sport movement and academia, highly sensitive issues, such as the global health emergency, can be taken into consideration with the least resistance and reservations by all parties.⁹

Sport and the Use of Technologies

Some of the changes caused by the outbreak of the pandemic are here to stay and will coexist with previous realities.

Changes in the workplace have been decisive, and sport is no stranger to them. Among other aspects, the use of technology has increased significantly, remote work has expanded, and distance education has become widespread.

⁹ Similarly, the opportunity should be extended to the regional level in order to adjust standards and priorities for the case of *Panam Sports*.

It is reasonable to consider that, from now on, offers of sport services will combine face-to-face and online methods, which will increasingly gain ground.

These changes bring about valuable windows of opportunity, mainly for State programs and services to reach social sectors usually excluded, such as those living in hard-to-access locations and in geographically distant and demographically disperse rural communities, where in-person services are not available.

Although these sectors often cannot find sport infrastructure that is accessible, safe and supportive, they can exercise in their homes or in adequate and easily accessible spaces.

In turn, remote working and group communication platforms erase borders and broaden employability while boosting the job market.

Online physical activity and training programs which can be accessed from home or functional and safe environments can favor the most vulnerable and excluded sectors (women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly).

More and Better International Co-operation

While recognizing the irreplaceable contribution that multiple private sector agents have made and will continue to make, the outbreak of the pandemic has exposed the importance of the role of the State, public services, and organized communities.

It has also shown that the most effective measures are multisectoral and consensual.

In general terms, there is a virtuous relationship between actions based on national unity and social cohesion, and better results are also obtained.

These observations can also be applied to the international arena.

Rebecca Grynspan, Secretary-General of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), has declared that *“regional cooperation was very good before the crisis, but the crisis has also revealed that it was insufficient”*.¹⁰

International organizations agree in fostering a future of greater unity and cohesion, both nationally and internationally, which will only be possible with more and better cooperation between countries.

In this light, the Ibero-American Sports Council is called upon to help build a better future through sport, with the support of ministers and high authorities for sport from the region and in close collaboration with valuable organizations like UNESCO, to foster more and better international cooperation.

It should always be remembered that: *“International co-operation and partnerships should be used for effective advocacy, at the international, regional and national levels, about the important contributions of physical education, physical activity and sport to social and economic development, while supporting and sharing related research and evidence”*.¹¹

¹⁰ Grynspan, Rebecca. Quoted in Deutsche Welle (2020). Available at: <https://www.dw.com/es/covid-19-y-el-desarrollo-de-am%C3%A9rica-latina-no-queda-otra-que-cooperar/a-53467044>.

¹¹ International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, Art. 12.2.

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