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《 論 說 》

## Training for peace

The utilisation of sport as an innovative mechanism to contribute towards societal reconstruction in a post-conflict environment

James Daniel Short

This paper discusses the appropriateness and results achieved in a specialised training programme facilitated by the Hiroshima Office of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in September 2015 - the Leadership and Communication Training Programme for the Afghanistan Womens' Football Team. This programme utilised sport as a mechanism for the promotion of societal reconstruction in a post-conflict environment.

### 1. Avenues towards peace through sporting activity

In a famous speech delivered in Monaco on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2000 on the occasion of the inauguration of the outstanding Brazilian footballer Edson Arantes do Nascimento better known as Pelé into the World Sports Academy of Fame, the former President of South Africa and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nelson Mandela described how sport has the potential to forge meaningful links between people of different nationalities, cultures and religions in a manner which few other human activities can achieve. Mandela emphasised that sport represents an activity in which people of all ages can interact directly solely as competitors in a game, and not as adherents to a particular political ideology, believers in a particular god or members of an ethnic group. Furthermore, sport represents a shared activity which is both enjoyable, beneficial to health, promotes a spirit of fair play and respect for an opponent, and is readily understandable by young people, irrespective of language barriers or levels of

education and wealth. In human history during the last century there have been a number of episodes in which seemingly insurmountable barriers that existed between different groups of people have been suddenly overcome when members of those groups met each other face to face to take part in sporting activity. Notable among these occurred during the First World War when on Christmas Day 1914 British and German soldiers got out of their trenches and played games of football together in no man's land. Another memorable event took place several decades later when a chance meeting between Chinese and American table tennis players in April 1971 led to members of the latter team being invited to play in China, which in no small part contributed to the thawing of relations between the two countries, and ultimately to the first visit by a sitting US President to Communist China when Richard Nixon visited Beijing in February 1972.

It can be strongly argued that in of itself sporting activity possesses a capacity which enables those who participate in it to circumvent what could be described as 'normal' channels of personal interaction and simply interact as one of many players in a game. In this way in many cases this activity can almost immediately strip away complex layers of identity which frequently lead to division between people and thereby create opportunities for the development of mutual understanding which standard modes of interaction and communication often fail to provide. In the famous cases cited above it is clear that the latter case led to considerably greater progress in terms of improved international relations than did the former since during the subsequent years of the First World War soldiers on both sides of the battlefield were forbidden by their officers from fraternising with the enemy on Christmas Day in either 1915 or 1916. However, in some sense a historical precedent had been created by what occurred in December 1914 and this has parallels with many events that occurred in subsequent decades. For example, despite the fact that a significant level of political tension existed between their countries, ice hockey players from the Soviet Union and United States met each other on a number of occasions in games that took place during the Cold War. In a

similar fashion, in more recent years cricketers from the rival nations of India and Pakistan, and footballers from Iran and Iraq, Argentina and England, and Iran and the United States have all met each other on the sports field in doubtless highly competitive, but also ultimately respectful matches in their respective sports.

With regard to these historic sporting contests in which the result of the match undoubtedly produced winners and losers but on no occasion led to serious injury among the competitors let alone the loss of life, it may be appropriate to paraphrase a famous statement made by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in a speech delivered at the White House in Washington DC on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1954. Opining on the importance of making strenuous efforts to pursue diplomatic as opposed to military means when seeking to address the conflicts that periodically arise between nations, Churchill memorably stated that “.....to jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war”<sup>(1)</sup>. In a similar respect, in relation to the inherent value that can be discerned from occasions where people from contending nations meet each other on the sports field rather than on the battlefield, one could offer a similar observation that “.....to play-play is always better than to slay-slay”.

In an influential article published in the Journal of Conflictology in 2013, the Colombian researcher and practitioner Alexander Cárdenas examined the intellectual foundations and actual practice of a variety of actors that have sought to pursue the goals of the promotion of peace and mutual understanding through the medium of sporting activity in various geographical contexts<sup>(2)</sup>. With a particular focus on countries that are emerging from protracted periods of conflict such as his homeland of Colombia and also Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, Cárdenas examined the activities of major international organisations such as the United Nations, the International Olympic

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(1) Winston Spencer Churchill, remarks at a White House luncheon, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1954; <http://www.bartleby.com/73/1914.html>

(2) Cárdenas, A. (2013), Peace Building Through Sport? An Introduction to Sport for Development and Peace, Journal of Conflictology, vol. 4, iss. 1, pp. 24-33.

Committee (IOC) and the world governing body of football the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), amongst others. In doing so he addressed the broader philosophical question of whether it is actually appropriate to pursue such goals through the medium of sporting activity. As a result of this analysis, while in no way excusing the frequently reprehensible conduct that has led to a number of high-profile scandals involving staff within some of the world's largest sporting organisations and in particular FIFA, Cárdenas reached the conclusion that many projects and initiatives instigated and financed by these organisations have made significant contributions to the reconstruction of post-conflict societies by means of forging links between former combatants and their respective communities through various sporting activities. In a number of locations large scale 'hard' style investments in sporting infrastructure such as the reconstruction of stadia and training facilities have been combined with 'soft' style initiatives that seek to reintegrate formerly fractured communities through games of football, cricket or other popular local sports which collectively have served to produce a variety of beneficial effects. Subsequently, specific lessons that have been learned from these projects have facilitated the adaptation and implementation of similar approaches in other post-conflict contexts which have also produced positive results<sup>(3)</sup>.

Building on Cárdenas' discussion, Short (2017) examined the positive effect that four remarkable and unexpected sporting successes had on the overall popular mood in the geographical contexts in which they occurred, three of which took place in environments that had been struggling to overcome challenging circumstances as a result of war or protracted periods of ethnic conflict<sup>(4)</sup>. This discussion highlighted the fact that a tangible feeling of exuberance and energy was generated among large

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(3) Cárdenas, A. (2013), op. cit., pp. 27–28.

(4) Short, J., (2017), *Alternative paths to peace: The role of sport in promoting peace and mutual understanding - perspectives drawn from cases from the late 20th and early 21st centuries*, 東洋法学第61卷1号, 273–295.

numbers of people in the locations in question as a result of historic victory achieved on the sports field, and that for a period of time this positive atmosphere was seen to carry over into other aspects of life. Nevertheless, it was asserted that attempting to replicate such occurrences in other contexts represents something of an impossible task since they occurred as the result of unique sporting circumstances. Consequently, with regard to the promotion of peace and mutual understanding through sporting activity, an argument was put forward in favour of initiatives that take place on a smaller and more replicable scale, including some of those facilitated by international actors such as the United Nations and FIFA, in order to increase the likelihood that tangible benefits will be produced for communities that have been caught up in war and conflict. One example of such an initiative is the **UNITAR Hiroshima Leadership and Communication Training Programme for the Afghanistan Women's Football Team** which is the main focus of the discussion in this paper.

## 2. An innovative approach for UNITAR - background to the initiative

The Hiroshima Office of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) began operations in July 2003 with the mandate of providing executive training in a number of fields to government officials, development practitioners and NGO staff from principally developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Since its establishment, one of the most important ongoing initiatives of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office<sup>(5)</sup> has been the provision of executive training to mid-level staff from various public and private sector organisations in Afghanistan through the UNITAR Hiroshima Afghanistan Fellowship Programme<sup>(6)</sup>. Begun in 2003 and currently in its fourteenth cycle, the Fellowship is an annual, six-month long capacity building initiative which

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(5) Unless otherwise stated, subsequent references in this paper to 'UNITAR' should be understood as referring to the activities and personnel of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office, and not to the entire UNITAR organisation which has its head office in Geneva, Switzerland and a satellite office in New York, USA.

since its inception has provided training to more than 500 Afghan governmental and non-governmental officials.

With regard to the current condition of the Fellowship, the fact that it remains in operation in 2018 stands as a testament to its success in delivering high quality training to its Afghan beneficiaries for a period of almost a decade a half<sup>(7)</sup>. Furthermore, its structure, training methodologies, operational delivery and educational outputs have been consistently highly evaluated by the principal funding bodies of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office, the Hiroshima Prefectural Government and the Hiroshima Municipal Government, as well as the Civil Service Commission of Afghanistan, which has facilitated its continued operation. An additional factor contributing to the success of the Fellowship has been the commitment demonstrated by its international faculty of training experts, many of whom have been involved with the programme for over a decade often on a pro-bono basis<sup>(8)</sup>.

In the mid-2010s two significant milestones were marked at the UNITAR Hiroshima Office: the first of these occurred in June 2013 when the Fellowship began its tenth

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(6) Henceforth in this paper the UNITAR Hiroshima Afghanistan Fellowship Programme is frequently referred to as 'the Fellowship'; <https://unitar.org/hiroshima/portfolio-projects/3172>

(7) The following discussion draws upon face-to-face interviews conducted by the author with staff at the UNITAR Hiroshima Office in September 2016 and April 2017. Interviews were conducted with the following staff members on these dates: Dr. Shamsul Hadi Shams, Training Officer, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016 and April 29<sup>th</sup> 2017; Ms. Junko Shimazu, Office Manager and Training Associate, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016; Mr. Berin McKenzie, Senior Specialist, April 28<sup>th</sup> 2017.

(8) The author has been personally involved with the UNITAR Hiroshima Afghanistan Fellowship Programme since January 2005 when he became an intern at the UNITAR Hiroshima Office. This involvement continued when he became a staff member at the Office between September 2006 - March 2008. Since 2013 he has been a voluntary external adviser, known as a Mentor, to one of the teams of Afghan Fellows on four occasions, including during the current 2017–2018 cycle.

A more detailed discussion of the establishment, structure and operations of the Afghanistan Fellowship Programme can be found in Short, J. (2016) *The Application of Aspects of Resilience Theory to a Human Capacity Building Initiative for a Post-conflict Country: The Case of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Fellowship for Afghanistan*, 東洋法学第59巻2号, 21–46.

cycle with a workshop in Kabul, Afghanistan which represented a decade since the programme had first begun operations;<sup>(9)</sup> the second milestone occurred in January 2014 when Ms. Mihoko Kumamoto was appointed as the new Director of the office<sup>(10)</sup>. Subsequent to these developments, discussions were held within UNITAR regarding possible means by which the Fellowship could be developed or expanded in some way. Due to the fact that it was in a demonstrably strong position vis-à-vis its Afghan, Japanese and other international stakeholders, it was felt that scope existed for additional activities which could increase the overall number of Afghan beneficiaries that UNITAR was currently reaching. One approach which became a focus of discussion was activities dedicated towards the empowerment of women within Afghan society. The reason for this was that since the instigation of the Fellowship in 2003, consistent efforts had been made by partners on both the Japanese and Afghan sides to increase the number of women participating in the programme's training activities, and over the course of its operations a reasonable degree of success had been achieved in this regard. However, due to a number of interrelating factors, both cultural and employment-related, the number of male participants in the Fellowship had consistently outnumbered the number of female ones. Consequently, the internal discussions which began in 2014 sought to identify potentially viable avenues through which training activities could be facilitated that were specifically designed to benefit Afghan women. With regard to this, in an interview with the author conducted in September 2016, the Training Officer of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office Dr. Shamsul Hadi Shams (himself an Afghan national), described the situation in the following manner:

When our new Director Ms. Kumamoto came in, we had many discussions about

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(9) UNITAR Fellowship for Afghanistan 2013, Workshop 1, Kabul, June 17-19, 2013; <http://www.unitar.org/hiroshima/unitar-fellowship-afghanistan-2013-workshop-one-kabul-17-19-june-2013>

(10) UNITAR Hiroshima, new head of Hiroshima Office takes office, January 6<sup>th</sup> 2014; <http://www.unitar.org/new-head-hiroshima-office-took-office>



gender balance and women's empowerment, and she [the new Director] wanted to do something for the women in Afghanistan because they are under-represented and under-valued in many ways in Afghan society. At the same time, there is a lot of focus from the donor community and from the current government about how we can help women to help themselves. So we had various discussions, both informal and formal, and were looking for some new training or educational opportunity for Afghan women <sup>(11)</sup>.

During this process a variety of alternatives for training or educational activities were considered, one of which focused on sporting activity which was an area in which the Hiroshima Office had no prior experience. These discussions coincided to some degree with UNITAR receiving an offer of financial assistance from a local business owner who had expressed interest in supporting the organisation's training activities based in Hiroshima <sup>(12)</sup>. Subsequently, a proposal was presented to this potential donor regarding a new sport-related training programme that would be organised and facilitated in Hiroshima and whose beneficiaries would be Afghan women. Approval was received for this proposal and as a consequence Shams and his colleagues within Afghanistan began to investigate an appropriate sporting body whose members could become the beneficiaries of this new initiative. Shams' explanation of this process continued thus:

We proposed a few ideas [about sport-related training activities] to the donor, and the reply was 'Yes, I'm in', and so that was the start. Then we started engaging with the Afghan side about what would be the best approach, who we could bring to Hiroshima, and we were looking at different options. One option was to bring a group of 20–30 young, educated, working female athletes and give them training on leadership. That was one idea that was circulated a lot, but at the same time we

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(11) Excerpt from the interview conducted by the author with Dr. Shamsul Hadi Shams at the UNITAR Hiroshima Office on September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, paraphrased slightly.

(12) With regard to the identity of this local business owner, during the interview Shams stated that this individual wishes to remain anonymous.

were looking for something that this training - bringing them to Hiroshima and giving them this opportunity, could do that would have more impact. Then the idea of the women's football team came up. So we had a long communication with them about finding the right time and who could come and all of these things, and then we developed a training programme for them. The reason we chose to bring the women's football team to Hiroshima was the person who wanted to support this programme [the donor] also wanted to raise the profile of the women's football team in Hiroshima which is called *Angeviolet*<sup>(13)(14)</sup>.

Following these discussions, during the course of the spring and summer of 2015 in cooperation with partners in Afghanistan the staff at the Hiroshima Office carried out extensive preparations to create and facilitate a new training programme that was specially designed for the Afghan women's football team. This process culminated in the holding of the aforementioned six-day UNITAR Hiroshima Leadership and Communication Training Programme for the Afghanistan Women's Football Team (hereafter for the sake of brevity referred to as the LCTP) between the 16<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015<sup>(15)</sup>.

The holding of this event represented the application of an innovative approach for UNITAR's training activities in Hiroshima due to the following circumstances:

Firstly, the programme was centred on sporting activity as opposed to UNITAR's more common areas of expertise such as management or leadership training, and its designated beneficiaries were accomplished athletes as opposed to officials from governmental or non-governmental agencies. Both of these key aspects of the programme represented firsts for the organisation in Hiroshima since hitherto its

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(13) Shams speaking to the author, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, op. cit.

(14) Angeviolet Hiroshima is a women's football club that play in the Chugoku League; <http://angeviolet.com>

(15) The UNITAR Hiroshima Leadership and Communication Training Programme for the Afghanistan Women's Football Team, 16-21 September 2015; <http://www.unitar.org/unitar-launches-training-programme-afghanistan-womens-football-team>

activities held in the city and in other locations had not utilised sport as a vehicle for the delivery of specialised training. Secondly, the beneficiaries were drawn from a narrow tranche of Afghan society, but one which it was felt could have a potentially significant impact on continuing efforts to promote women's empowerment in Afghanistan due to their highly visible public profile within the country. Thirdly, the programme was funded and to some extent created in accordance with the wishes of a local donor who was at the same time seeking to raise the profile of women's sport in Hiroshima. Fourthly, it was facilitated in cooperation with a number of local partners in the city, including the Angeviolet football team, many of whom had previously had little or no involvement with UNITAR's activities. Consequently, due to these significant differences from the organisation's previous activities, a number of questions arose with regard to the overall appropriateness of this initiative, including from the staff of the Hiroshima Office itself.

### 3. Sporting steps in the right direction?

As has been debated widely in both the public and academic spheres, the utilisation of sport as a mechanism to promote peace and mutual understanding and more recently societal reconstruction in post-conflict environments does not represent an approach which inspires universal approval. Indeed, a body of thought exists which has been highly critical of endeavours of this nature, a view that was famously expounded by the novelist George Orwell in an article published over half a century ago in the *Tribune* magazine<sup>(16)</sup>. In his 2013 article Cárdenas gives credence to these concerns, but puts forward the case that sporting projects facilitated in post-conflict societies such as his homeland of Colombia have achieved tangible successes in bridging divisions which existed between formerly hostile communities. He draws attention in particular to

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(16) Orwell, G., (1945), *The Sporting Spirit*, *Tribune* magazine, London; [http://www.orwell.ru/library/articles/spirit/english/e\\_spirit](http://www.orwell.ru/library/articles/spirit/english/e_spirit)

projects such as the “Football and Peace Network (Red Fútbol y Paz) and the south-south cooperative, academic, grassroots project Goals for Peace (Goles por la Paz)”<sup>(17)</sup>. With regard to activities of this nature which are carried out by United Nations agencies, it goes without saying that they are facilitated on the basis of policy decisions taken at the highest level of the UN, meaning resolutions that are passed by the General Assembly. These resolutions provide the philosophical justification and institutional framework for activities such as the LCTP facilitated by UNITAR in Hiroshima. The resolutions in question, and particularly that entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” which contains the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, are as follows:

United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 (seventieth session, 2015), “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”:

[Item] 37. Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognize the growing contribution 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<sup>(18)</sup>.

This thinking is expounded in General Assembly resolution 70/L.3, “Sport for development and peace: building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal”:

The General Assembly……Recognizing the valuable contribution of sport in promoting education, sustainable development, peace, cooperation, solidarity, fairness, social inclusion and health at the local, regional and international levels, and noting that, as declared in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, sports can

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(17) Cárdenas, A. (2013), op. cit., p. 25.

(18) General Assembly resolution 70/1 (21<sup>st</sup> October 2015), available from UN Documents at: [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_70\\_1\\_E.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf)

contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding among peoples and nations……,

Recognizing also the imperative need to engage women and girls in the practice of sport for development and peace, and welcoming activities that aim to foster and encourage initiatives in this regard at the global level……<sup>(19)</sup>

Additional high-level UN pronouncements developing this thinking and strategic approach were published in 2016: the Report of the Secretary-General, 71/179, “Sport for development and peace: towards sport’s enabling of sustainable development and peace”<sup>(20)</sup>; and General Assembly resolution 71/160, “Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace”<sup>(21)</sup>.

In spite of the existence of this clear institutional framework on the part of the UN as a whole, due to the fact that sport-focused training activities had previously not been facilitated by UNITAR in Hiroshima, doubts remained on the part of the staff at the Hiroshima Office with regard to how effective the application of this new approach would be. However, as events would transpire during the course of the September 2015 programme, it became clear that the adoption of this approach represented a strategy which had the potential to produce highly beneficial results for most if not all of the stakeholders involved.

In the September 2016 interview, during the process of elucidating to Shams his personal motivation for carrying out an investigation into this topic, the author described the view he had previously held vis-à-vis the utilisation of sport as a means to promote peace and mutual understanding in post-conflict environments. It can be said that this view had more than a little in common with the highly sceptical, if not outright cynical view expressed by Orwell in his aforementioned article in the Tribune.

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(19) General Assembly resolution 70/L.3, (20<sup>th</sup> October 2015), available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/70/L.3>

(20) Report of the Secretary-General 71/179 (21<sup>st</sup> July 2016), available at: <https://undocs.org/A/71/179>

(21) General Assembly resolution 71/160, (16<sup>th</sup> December 2016), available at: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/71/160>

On hearing this explanation, Shams responded that prior to September 2015 he had also held something of a similar opinion. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the LCTP ultimately proved to be a highly successful initiative, the thinking that he and his colleagues had previously had changed significantly in respect of activities of this nature. It is held that this development represents an important instance of institutional learning on the part of the UNITAR organisation in Hiroshima.

#### 4. Application of the innovative approach - factors contributing to a successful outcome

In terms of a new style of training initiative for UNITAR in Hiroshima, it can be argued that to some extent the facilitation of the LCTP represented something of a gamble for the organisation. It goes without saying that as a result of almost a decade and a half of successful operations the organisation had accumulated an impressive repository of expertise in the planning and delivery of specialised training both in Hiroshima and in other locations. This expertise refers to both the design of context-specific educational content, the instructional methodologies utilised to deliver that content, having access to a rich local and international network of experts who can be brought in to direct the learning, and having comprehensive knowledge of the numerous administrative and logistical processes which need to be negotiated in order to realise a successful executive training event. However, as elucidated above in section 2, the LCTP represented a training initiative in which there were a number of elements which had not been attempted before, and therefore the staff of the office were aware that the body of knowledge and experience that had been accrued since 2002 could not guarantee a successful outcome in this case.

In spite of these somewhat uncertain starting conditions, in the interviews with the author, both Shams and his colleague the Office Manager and Training Associate of UNITAR Ms. Junko Shimazu stated unequivocally that the LCTP had proved to be a success as a result of a number of contributing factors. The author has categorised

these factors into three specific types: i) logistical arrangements, ii) educational content, and iii) cooperation received from new and existing partners.

### Logistical arrangements

In terms of the logistical arrangements, to a large extent the LCTP followed the model which UNITAR utilises for training programmes that take place in Hiroshima for a period of one to two weeks. This includes the travel arrangements to and from Hiroshima from the training programme participants' home countries, their accommodation in the city and the training activities which take place in the centre of the city either within the UNITAR Hiroshima Office itself or at a nearby larger venue, for example the TKP Garden City building<sup>(22)</sup>. With regard to programmes relating to Afghanistan, since 2006 many of the specific preparations which are required for nationals of this country to visit Japan for executive training have been overseen by a Kabul-based employee of UNITAR, Mr. Sabahuddin Sokout, who was initially one of the Fellows of the 2005 cycle of the UNITAR Hiroshima Afghanistan Fellowship Programme, and subsequently became a Training Associate of the organisation. Sokout has played a vital role in coordinating UNITAR's activities relating to Afghanistan by means of assisting with documentary procedures, escorting groups of participants to and from Japan, providing translation and cultural background information, and also frequently facilitating key elements of the training programmes. During the September 2015 programme he carried out this role in coordination with his compatriot Shams and other colleagues from the Hiroshima Office. As a result of following this logistical model in which the staff of the office have gained over a decade of experience, the fundamentals of the programme - that is to say the travel, accommodation and training activities which took place in the centre of Hiroshima, progressed relatively smoothly. With that said, several of the elements of the LCTP represented activities that had previously not been part of UNITAR training programmes in the city which

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(22) TKP Garden City Hiroshima, <https://www.kashikaigishitsu.net/facilitys/gc-hiroshima/>

consequently created a number of new logistical challenges, as will be explained below.

#### Educational content

With regard to the educational content of the programme, the LCTP incorporated a number of learning activities which are common to UNITAR training programmes that take place in Hiroshima, such as visiting the Peace Memorial Park and Museum, listening to the first-hand experiences of atomic bomb survivors - the Hibakusha, and learning about the reconstruction of the city in the years following August 1945. Additional common activities included interactive sessions that took place in a classroom setting which focused on team building and the development of skills required for leadership. Principally however, the programme was focused on *sports training* which was facilitated by means of cooperative sessions carried out with players and coaches from Hiroshima's womens' football teams. These sessions focused on a variety of football-related topics including specific on-the-field skills such as ball control, passing, shooting and set-plays, and also strategies and tactics that can be utilised for effective game management. The participants also received a lecture about the history of women's football in Japan and information relating to the maintenance of good overall health through physical exercise and nutrition.

In addition to the sports training which included practice matches against two local teams, the programme also incorporated activities designed to promote cultural exchange between the Afghan athletes and their Japanese hosts. This included demonstrations of aspects of Japanese culture given by students of a local girls' high school,<sup>(23)</sup> some of which the participants were able to try themselves, and informal sessions in which the participants were able to interact freely with their Japanese counterparts. They also had the opportunity to watch games of the men's professional football team Sanfrece and the Hiroshima Toyo Carp baseball team, and visit the

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(23) These activities took place at the Hiroshima Women's Bunkyo (Cultural) High School, <http://www.h-bunkyo.ac.jp/highschool/>



Itsukushima Shrine World Heritage Site on Miyajima Island<sup>(24)</sup>.

#### Cooperation received from new and existing partners

The factor which in all likelihood contributed most to the success of the LCTP was the cooperation which UNITAR received from a variety of partners both within Hiroshima and in other locations. With regard to this, it goes without saying that the programme received significant support from the organisation's main partners in Hiroshima, the Prefectural and Municipal Governments. Due to the fact that its funding was provided by a local donor, this support did not come in the form of finance, but in assistance with establishing contact with various sporting organisations within the city and arranging a number of the events of the programme, such as visits to three local schools (including the aforementioned girls' high school), formal receptions with senior city officials,<sup>(25)</sup> contacts with the media and so on. As a result of this, UNITAR was able to receive wide-ranging support from both the Angeviolet women's football team, the under-18 Angeviolet team and the staff at the Edion Stadium where the Sanfrece team is based, and also cooperation from the Hiroshima Toyo Carp baseball team<sup>(26)</sup>. In addition, the programme received support from the Embassy of Afghanistan in Tokyo, and during the programme the Ambassador of Afghanistan visited Hiroshima in order to greet the participants and deliver a speech.

### 5. Successful elements of the LCTP

In the interviews with the author, Shams and Shimazu drew attention to a number of elements of the LCTP which delivered largely positive outcomes and thereby contributed to the overall success of the programme. These included the common

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(24) Hiroshima Sanfrece men's professional football team, <https://www.sanfrece.co.jp/>; Hiroshima Toyo Carp baseball team, <http://www.carp.co.jp/>; Itsukushima Shrine, Miyajima Island, <http://www.itsukushimajinja.jp/index.html>

(25) This included receptions with the Mayor of Hiroshima City and the Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture.

(26) In this process UNITAR was also able to take advantage of the extensive professional network of the donor within Hiroshima.

training activities included in many UNITAR programmes in Hiroshima, many aspects of the concerted sports training, and the cultural exchanges and other interactions that took place with local students and ordinary citizens in Hiroshima. With regard to the wide variety of activities incorporated into the LCTP, Shams opined thus:

UNITAR provided training on leadership and management, gender balance and women's empowerment [in a classroom setting] which was well received by the participants. Then they worked together with the Angeviet team, this was training with them, learning from the Japanese team's experience about teamwork, how they play a game, sports strategy and training methods. We had two days training together with them, [and they] became training peers for the Afghan ladies so they could communicate, share ideas and experiences and learn from each other.

At the Cultural High School the students showed us some of the cultural activities they are doing, and these were so well received by the ladies from Afghanistan, because there is no music or archery,.....many of these activities like drumming and music, all these things are missing in their own education at home. And when they visited this school and viewed these activities they said 'Wow - these girls are so talented and focused! Why is it that we can't do that?' They had the chance to try the archery and drumming, wear yukatas and receive the tea ceremony, so it was an amazing experience for these girls who saw all this talent and potential that the Japanese girls have, and it was really eye-opening for them. This was another part of the programme - to promote local person-to-person engagement between Afghanistan and Hiroshima. They also participated in the Peace Day celebrations that took place at the Mazda Zoom Zoom Stadium,<sup>(27)</sup> and then they watched a baseball game there, so they had the opportunity to engage with the local community in the stadium.

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(27) The home stadium of the Hiroshima Toyo Carp baseball team.

In my estimation it was one of the most successful programmes that we [UNITAR] have done in Hiroshima so far. It was quite interesting that for the first time we used sport as a way to promote cultural exchange and learning, as well as women's empowerment. I felt it was a neutral and natural way to address these issues<sup>(28)</sup>.

Shimazu echoed many of Shams' opinions and drew attention to the considerable cooperation that UNITAR received from a number of new partners in Hiroshima which ultimately proved pivotal to the programme's success.

UNITAR had never carried out a sports programme aimed at contributing to peacebuilding before - actually inviting athletes to Hiroshima, so there were many things we didn't know about. They [the participants] said they would like to practise every day, so we thought where can we do this? We had to arrange a training ground at very short notice. During the practice they needed water and fruit because they were doing physical exercise, they needed certain foods etc. We didn't know about these things so had quite a lot of trouble arranging them.

The Angeviolet team and their backing staff gave us great support, at the beginning on a voluntary basis. They arranged lots of things on our behalf - making contacts, timings, locations, water, food - they were very keen to cooperate with us from the beginning. They couldn't arrange everything themselves, so they contacted other new partners on our behalf like the Hiroshima City Sports Association and the Hiroshima Prefecture Sports Association<sup>(29)</sup>. They also contacted the Sanfrece football team, some elementary and junior high schools, and some private soccer teams in the city - they contacted them and arranged all sorts of things. Thanks to this we were able to deliver a training programme with really meaningful content<sup>(30)</sup>.

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(28) Shams speaking to the author, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, paraphrased slightly, op. cit.

(29) Hiroshima City Sports Association, <http://www.sports-or.city.hiroshima.jp/>; Hiroshima Prefecture Sports Association, <http://www.hiroken-taikyo.jp/>

Shimazu emphasised that this style of training programme provided an opportunity for many citizens in Hiroshima to become involved in UNITAR's activities in a tangible, hands-on way. Hitherto for a number of years the staff of the office had struggled to design and facilitate events in which people in the city could participate more actively rather than, for example, merely being audience members at a formal speech or roundtable discussion hosted by UNITAR<sup>(31)</sup>. Shimazu stated:

We could identify all sorts of merits through carrying out this type of programme. Until now UNITAR's interactions with local people have really only been through our public sessions - UNITAR has been doing something [such as holding a training event] and then local people are invited to attend. But this time we received actual assistance from all sorts of local groups which was much more meaningful, so we were in fact cooperating with them and creating something together. This was very different to the way we have worked before. And I think that for local people this was more enjoyable, it was a concrete contribution to an event rather than just being a guest at some UNITAR activity, hearing about something and then going home.

The citizens' networks in Hiroshima are really extensive, so if you are able to tap in to one individual or group you can soon reach all sorts of others, and they can quickly recommend other people to contact or other sources of assistance. Rather than holding ten to twenty of our public sessions....., in comparison I think this approach is much more effective in raising people's awareness about what UNITAR is doing and how they can become involved if interested<sup>(32)</sup>.

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(30) Excerpt from the interview conducted by the author with Ms. Junko Shimazu at the UNITAR Hiroshima Office on September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, paraphrased slightly.

(31) This has been a difficulty that the staff at the UNITAR Hiroshima Office have faced for more than a decade, as elucidated in Short, J., (2010), *Local authority initiatives to strengthen Japan's international contribution: the Hiroshima Prefectural Government's "Hiroshima Peace Contribution Plan" and its relationship with the Hiroshima Office of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)*, 東洋法学第54卷1号 45-90.

Both Shams and Shimazu drew attention to the considerable media coverage that the LCTP generated which was greater than that which UNITAR had received for any of its previous events, save the event that marked the opening of the office in 2003. This coverage, coupled with the sporting nature of the programme, created significant interest among people in Hiroshima in UNITAR's activities, some of which remained in evidence following the conclusion of the programme. In a similar fashion, popular interest in the programme was also generated within Afghanistan as following their return to the country, the participants were invited to the presidential palace to meet President Ashraf Ghani in order to describe their experiences in Hiroshima, and were then interviewed by local media organisations. Shams stated:

No other programme that we have done was so well covered by the media - they were present all the time because there was so much interest in it. Plus it was the national team of Afghanistan! .....visiting and playing a game with a local team in Hiroshima, and they took quite a pride in this. They were very pleased that they could meet and talk to the Afghan ladies and interact.

It was also a good way for these ladies to see so many good things here in Hiroshima and to feel a connection - they were really touched by this programme that we designed and developed. And because of that they got so much international attention, as well as national attention, and immediately after going back they were invited by the President of Afghanistan. This was a very symbolic and important event.

.....And because of this UNITAR got a lot of focus [locally] and people were saying that "you guys are doing some fantastic work." People were asking me "Oh you're from UNITAR? You brought the Afghan ladies' football team to Hiroshima, right?" So people were very interested in this because it was the first time that a female team had visited here. It was a historic visit<sup>(32)</sup>.

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(32) Shimazu speaking to the author, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, paraphrased slightly, op. cit.

## 6. Lessons learned from the LCTP

It was stated in section 4 above that the facilitation of the LCTP in September 2015 represented something of a gamble for the UNITAR organisation in Hiroshima. In terms of the programme's educational focus, its intended beneficiaries, many of the training methodologies utilised and the various partners involved, the majority of these key elements of the programme were either partly or entirely new and untried. As a consequence, as has been stated, prior to the start of the LCTP the staff at the Hiroshima Office were far from confident that they would be able to deliver a training programme which could meet the expectations of both the incoming Afghan participants and the local business owner who had taken the decision to provide funding for a UNITAR initiative for the first time. However, in the views of Dr. Shamsul Hadi Shams and Ms. Junko Shimazu, the LCTP had proved to be a success, and as a result their own opinions changed with regard to the value of utilising sport as a mechanism for executive training, which can in its turn contribute towards societal reconstruction in a post-conflict environment such as Afghanistan.

During his research for this paper, as stated in note 7 above the author also interviewed the Senior Specialist of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office, Mr. Berin McKenzie. In this interview which due to logistical circumstances took place six months after those conducted with Shams and Shimazu in April 2017, McKenzie expressed a similar view to his colleagues, to the effect that to a large extent the LCTP had proved to be a success, and that sport-related training represented an appropriate approach for UNITAR to pursue in its activities that are aimed at contributing towards the broader goal of post-conflict reconstruction<sup>(34)</sup>.

With regard to the principal objective of the LCTP, which, in line with the wishes of the new Director of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office Ms. Mihoko Kumamoto, was

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(33) Shams speaking to the author, Sept. 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, op. cit.

decided as a result of the process of internal discussions that took place within the organisation following her appointment in January 2014, this was to contribute towards the empowerment of women in Afghan society<sup>(35)</sup>. In respect of this issue, over and above the description of the participants' positive reactions and responses during the programme provided by Shams, and the fact that following their return to Afghanistan they were granted an audience with the President and interviewed by several media organisations, it is unfortunately beyond the scope of the current paper to ascertain as to whether this objective was achieved or not. However, due to the fact that this represents a fundamentally important question, it is the intention of the author to examine these circumstances in forthcoming research.

With regard to specific lessons that were learned as a result of the facilitation of the LCTP, it is held that fundamentally the most important lesson for the staff of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office was that sport-focused training represents an activity in which the organisation can and therefore should henceforth become meaningfully engaged. This realisation can be seen as a significant instance of institutional learning on the part of UNITAR in Hiroshima, and it falls in line with the intellectual argument put forward in the aforementioned article by Cárdenas, the policy strategy promulgated by major international sporting organisations such as the IOC and FIFA, as well as specific pronouncements made in several recent UN General Assembly resolutions.

Generally speaking, it is held that the LCTP succeeded in delivering a noteworthy level of satisfaction to the various stakeholders who were involved in it. These stakeholders are as follows:

#### The Afghan participants

While it is recognized that additional investigation is required in order to ascertain

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(34) Mr. Berin McKenzie is not quoted directly in this paper due to the fact that the 2017 interview with him focused primarily on the follow-up programme to the LCTP which took place in March 2017, see note 36 below. This latter programme will be the focus of a subsequent paper.

(35) See above, section 2.

more definitively whether the Afghan participants achieved real empowerment in their lives as a result of their participation in the LCTP, the observational evidence provided by Shams and Shimazu strongly indicates that they found the sports training and other programme activities beneficial, and that their perspectives had been broadened by their various experiences in Hiroshima.

#### The donor

Regarding the donor, while the wish for anonymity on the part of this individual has precluded direct enquiries being made in relation to overall levels of satisfaction with the programme, the fact that funding for a follow-up programme of a similar type which took place in March 2017 was provided by the same source clearly suggests that to a large extent the donor was satisfied with the results that were achieved in September 2015<sup>(36)</sup>.

#### The Hiroshima Prefectural Government

Regarding the Hiroshima Prefectural Government, Shams and Shimazu both reported its satisfaction with the LCTP due to the following reasons: i) the programme had secured funding from an external source; ii) it had received cooperation from a number of different actors in Hiroshima, many of whom had hitherto had little or no involvement with UNITAR's other activities in the city; and iii) it had stimulated sustained media interest and thereby raised the overall profile of the organisation among ordinary people in Hiroshima.

#### Other organisations within Hiroshima

In general, this refers to the variety of sporting bodies within Hiroshima that provided a wide range of assistance to UNITAR during the course of the LCTP<sup>(37)</sup>. In addition, several schools hosted large events during the programme, in particular the Hiroshima

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(36) This follow-up programme was the Leadership and Communication Training Programme for the Afghanistan Under-18s Football Team which took place in Hiroshima from March 24<sup>th</sup> - April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017; <https://www.unitar.org/leadership-and-communication-training-programme-afghanistan-u-18-womens-football-team-held-hiroshima>



Womens' Bunkyo High School, and assistance was also received from a number of smaller citizens' groups such as local football teams. Shams and Shimazu both reported that these actors consistently demonstrated willingness to become involved with the programme and contribute towards its overall success.

In spite of achieving a number of positive outcomes, it goes without saying that the LCTP was not an unqualified success and several lessons were learned as a result of difficulties that arose during the programme. Principal among these was the fact that the schedule of activities proved to be decidedly tight and perhaps over-filled, and as a consequence both the participants and UNITAR staff found it difficult to maintain levels of energy as the programme drew towards its conclusion. Shimazu commented that as the participants had requested some time for football practice each day in addition to the other activities included in the schedule, the combined group frequently found itself 'in action' from eight in the morning until nine in the evening. Furthermore, in contrast to the majority of UNITAR training programmes facilitated in Hiroshima in which one or two lead Resource Persons direct the learning which commonly takes place in one central location such as the TKP Garden City building, the activities of the LCTP were held in several different locations - some such as the Edion Stadium and Womens' Bunkyo High School that are located far from the centre of the city, and this added significantly to the overall logistical challenge.

An additional element of the LCTP which proved something of a disappointment was the final friendly match played between the Afghan participants and the Angeviolet team at the Edion Stadium on the penultimate day of the programme. Following the considerable media attention that had been generated since the participants' arrival in Hiroshima, this event had been billed as the showpiece highlight of the LCTP, and as a result it attracted a large number of supporters to the stadium. However, despite the best efforts of the Afghan ladies, they were unfortunately defeated heavily by the

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(37) See Shimazu's comments in section 5 above.

Japanese team which was likely rather demoralising for the players and anti-climactic for those who came to watch the match<sup>(38)</sup>.

In the interviews with the author, both Shams and Shimazu commented that the planning and delivery of the LCTP had proved to be a significant professional challenge and for a number of reasons, not least the fact that logistical arrangements were changing on an almost daily basis and that programme management decisions were sometimes having to be made in real time, it had undoubtedly stretched the resources and expertise of the staff of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office. However, at the same time both were unequivocal in their conviction that the experience had been worth it for the reasons outlined above, and also that it had been an education for them to witness the variety of positive outcomes that were engendered by a sport-focused training programme and the great contributions which were made towards its success by a wide variety of organisations and other actors in Hiroshima. Ultimately, it can be said that in this case the utilisation of sport as an innovative mechanism to contribute towards societal reconstruction in a post-conflict environment demonstrated its potential to deliver benefits to a wide variety of stakeholders, and it is therefore held that this approach offers valuable avenues for comparable future endeavours for the UNITAR organisation in Hiroshima.

The final words of this paper which are at the same time both simple and profound belong to Ms. Junko Shimazu. In describing the way that the participants from Afghanistan were quickly able to create understanding and friendships with groups of people of many different ages in Hiroshima by means of shared sporting activity, she echoes the sentiments of Nelson Mandela mentioned at the beginning of this paper, writers such as Alexander Cárdenas, project staff from international organisations such as the IOC, FIFA and the UN, and also the soldiers on the battlefields of the First World

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(38) "Afghanistan women play friendly football match in Hiroshima", Hiroshima Peace Media Center, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015; <http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/?p=51719>

War on Christmas Day 1914 who merely wished to cease the violence surrounding them and play sport together - not as Britons or French or Germans, nor as defenders of any king or country, but just as people.

When we visited the Hiroshima Womens' Bunkyo High School, the students were of similar ages [to the Afghan participants] so it was possible to arrange various activities and cultural exchanges with them. We also had exchanges and interactions with students from elementary schools, local private football teams and other citizens in Hiroshima city which were really good. Because, basically, it was sporting activity - it was easy for enjoyable, personal interactions to occur just through them playing and running around together<sup>(39)</sup>.

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(39) Shimazu speaking to the author, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, paraphrased slightly, op. cit.

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