

‘Youth and Sport’ Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Government Policy in Nepal

Dr. Jeet Bahadur Sapkota (Japan)
Dr. Pramila Neupane (Japan)

ABSTRACT

Sport’s positive impact on socioeconomic development is well documented in the literature. The theoretical foundation of sport as a vehicle for social change is also developing together with the global growth of sport for development and peace (SDP) organizations. However, local SDP organizations in the least developed countries (LDCs) have rarely been studied. It is also not clear how related public policy is evolving in such countries. This paper is an attempt to narrow this research gap by exploring the grassroots ‘youth and sport’ non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Nepal and government SDP policy (if any). We found that the proliferation of the ‘youth and sport’ NGOs since 1990 has contributed to peace and development of the nation in many ways, although policymakers have failed to introduce any organized SDP policy. Thus, we suggest further in-depth research on this topic and formulate a comprehensive SDP policy to develop a well-functioning SDP sector in Nepal.

KEYWORDS: Sport for development and peace, grassroots NGOs, development policy

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INTRODUCTION

Right after adaptation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the United Nations’ General Assembly in 2000, the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) was established in 2001. It was opened because sport has a huge potential to contribute to peace and development, especially in disadvantaged and highly diverged areas (Schulenkorf & Sugden, 2011). Consequently, a number of resolutions have been passed by the UN’ General Assembly to achieve international development goals, especially the MDGs before 2015, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) after 2015. Although the UNOSDP closed in May 2017 leaving its roles to International Olympic Committee (IOC), numerous international, national as well as local efforts have been made aiming to optimize the use of sports for development outcomes. These efforts led to the growth of SDP organizations at both global and local levels that ultimately helped sport for development and peace (SDP) to emerge as an important sector of international development (Schulenkorf & Adair, 2014). Despite such a growing global trend, local SDP organizations and government policies towards SDP sectors have not been explored well. Such exploration is, however, essential for two reasons. First, global progress on development, particularly on achieving SDGs, largely depends on the success of LDCs (Dahlman & Mealy, 2016) because LDCs have a shallow level of development indicators and are highly vulnerable to natural disasters and other external shocks. According to the United Nations classifications, currently, there are 47 LDCs, which are mainly located in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Secondly, but more importantly, sport offers the rationale and

inexpensive means to development (Darnell, 2012). Because such inexpensive means are most suitable for the critically resource-constrained LDCs, this paper explores the grassroots ‘youth and sport’ NGOs and related government policies of Nepal.

Many studies have already found robust evidence of the positive impact of sports on peace and development indicators. For instance, Fokwang (2009), Kay (2009), and Lindsey and Grattan (2012) have found sports as a positive force for social change, by meeting the local demand for development. Lyras and Peachey (2012) argued that SDP programs help change society positively by promoting cross-cultural exchange, resolving conflicts, and supporting the people lagging behind from the mainstream society. At the community level, sport helps to develop a network among its members in highly diverse society (Sherry, Karg & O’May, 2011; Burnett, 2009; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Sports also boost social capital among participants and other stakeholders (Sherry, 2010; Burnett, 2006; Tonts, 2005). Broadly, sports can serve as a new engine in advancing various dimensions of development (Levermore, 2008).

At the global level, SDP initiatives draw attention from governmental and non-governmental actors, donors and development agencies, and sporting bodies around the world. As a result, SDP organizations are growing rapidly at different levels. By assessing SDP organizations systematically, Svensson and Woods (2017) found that 955 entities are involved in practicing SDP in grassroots levels, among 3138 organizational entries in the global SDP database.

However, we find that on the one hand, there are limited studies at the national level of the LDCs. On the other hand, there is a growing interest among policymakers as well as scholars on a deeper understanding of the grassroots SDP organizations. Therefore, this study examines the situation of Nepal, a landlocked LDC which suffered from a decade-long armed conflict from 1996 to 2006 followed by another decade of turbulent political transition. It is also interesting to explore the case of Nepal as a nation that has been wholly restructured from a centrally controlled Hindu Kingdom to a Secular Federal Republic that divides the nation into seven provinces and 753 powerful local governance units (Bogati, Cox, Karki & Sisk, 2017).

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

We used the data of NGOs collected from the Social Welfare Council (SWC) of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. According to the Social Welfare Act, 1992, SWC promotes, facilitates and coordinates NGOs and monitor and evaluate their activities, and it is mandatory for all NGOs to be registered in SWC to do any activity or implement any project.

In this study, we follow a descriptive method to explore ‘youth and sport’ NGOs and the government policy of Nepal. We first examine the NGOs database, in which all the self-governing, voluntary, and private but not for profit organizations should be registered under the Social Welfare Act, 1992 (SWC Nepal, 1992). When a new NGO is registered, each NGO must define their main sector even though most of them engage in several sectors. For instance, the NGO from Kathmandu city, *Kirtipur Khelkud Bikas Club* (Kirtipur Sports Development Club), is specified under the ‘Community and Rural Development’ sector. However, it is obvious from the name of the NGO that it belongs to the ‘youth and sport’ sector and it is not from the rural area. We corrected such errors and reorganized the sectors as shown in Table 1. We referred to the name of the NGOs to correct or identify the sectoral belongings. Thus, to make the sectoral classification more rational, we changed the ‘Youth Services’ to ‘youth and sport’. The ‘Community and Rural Development’ sector is disaggregated into ‘Community Development’ and ‘Rural Development’ as many NGOs have a clear focus on ‘rural’. Similarly, the ‘Moral Development’ is changed to ‘Religious and Moral’ as most of the NGOs in these sectors have their focus on religion and/or culture.

For instance, *Rashtriya Hindu Ekata Munch* (National Hindu United Forum) is primarily working for the promotion and protection of Hindu religion and culture. Focusing on ‘youth and sport’ sector, we examine their trend since 1990. As Nepal reinstated the multiparty democracy in 1990 after the 30 years long active monarchy, NGOs proliferated since then following the support from the government and donors. We also disaggregated the distribution of the NGOs by the Provinces. The provinces were established for the first time under the new Constitution of Nepal 2015. To the authors’ knowledge, there is no NGOs information and analysis available yet by Province.

Table 1. Sectoral categorization of NGOs in Nepal

Sectors as per SWC	Sectors reorganized in this study
• Community and Rural Development Services	• Community Development
• Youth Services	• Rural Development
• Health Services	• Youth and Sport
• AIDS and Abuse Control	• Health
• Educational Development	• Education
• Environmental Protection	• Environment
• Handicapped and Disabled Services	• Disability
• Moral Development	• Religious and Moral
• Child Welfare	• Children
• Women Services	• Women

To explore the relevant government policies, we reviewed the ‘Youth Vision – 2025 and Ten-Year Strategic Plan,’ which was adopted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in October 2015. It is the most relevant policy document targeting ‘youth and sport’ sector. Similarly, we examined the national periodic development plan, namely the ‘Fourteenth Plan (2016/17–2019/20)’. It is the nation’s first medium to long-term policy direction adopted right after the promulgation of the new Constitution of Nepal 2015. Thus, we argue that the ‘Fourteenth Plan’ provides the foundation for development in the new political context hence worth exploring its strengths and weaknesses in different aspects of socioeconomic development.

‘YOUTH AND SPORT’ NGOS IN NEPAL

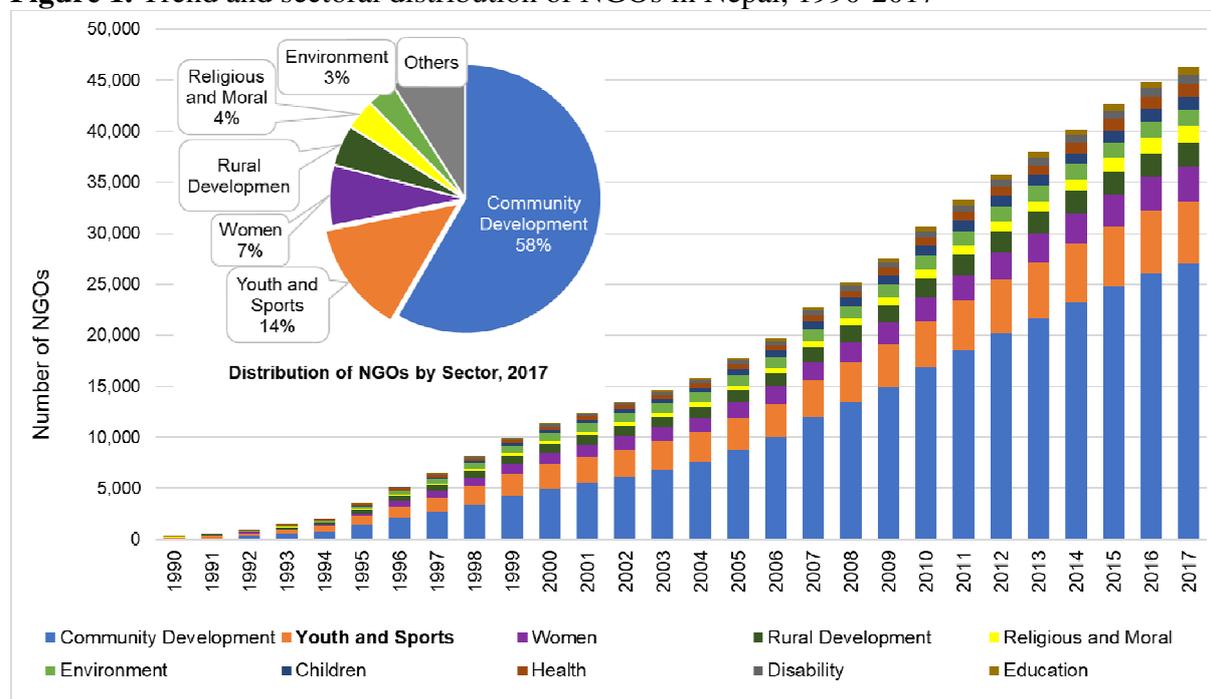
There are a large number of NGOs in each sector in Nepal. Figure 1 presents the sectoral composition of the NGOs registered to the SWC as of July 2017. It also shows the sectoral trend of the NGOs from 1990 to 2017. Among the total number of 46,235, 6,230 (14%) NGOs belong to ‘Youth and Sport’ sector. The top NGOs sector is the ‘Community Development’, which bags 49% (n=26,950) of the total number. We can also observe a continuous growth of the NGOs in each of the sectors over the period. Notably, many NGOs operates in across sectors. Such as an NGO namely *Nutrition and Health, Community and Rural Development* established in 2012 in Bhaktapur district covers three sectors: health, community development, and rural development.

As many scholars have argued that civil society organizations, including NGOs, can play a crucial role in nation building (Ehrenberg, 2017; Fernandes, 2015; Way, 2014; Perry and Thomson, 2004; Newton, 2001), there is no doubt that such a rapid growth of NGOs have contributed to development and peacebuilding in Nepal. Indeed, the government has acknowledged civil society as one of the main stakeholders of development in its periodic development plans. For example, the Tenth Plan outlined the roles of NGOs as a significant contributor to local development, encouraging and facilitating them to work for

underdeveloped communities, particularly in remote areas (NPC, 2002). It is also notable that some of the civil society groups played a crucial role in the peace negotiations between the Maoist insurgents and the government in 2006 which helped to end the decade-long armed conflict in the country (Holtermann, 2016).

There are mainly two areas of work of ‘youth and sport’ NGOs. One group focuses their work on ‘youth services’, which covers youth-focused activities, such as advocating for youth participation, skill development, youth mobilization in disaster and other major events, and so on. The other group focuses on ‘sports development’ which promotes physical activities and/or develops different types of sports. Thus, these NGOs are primarily either ‘youth clubs’ or ‘sports clubs’ established at different levels from local to national. Notably, these NGOs are mainly run voluntarily by young people focusing on the development of young people and sports.

Figure 1. Trend and sectoral distribution of NGOs in Nepal, 1990-2017



Source: The authors’ creation using the data collected from the SWC of Nepal Government.

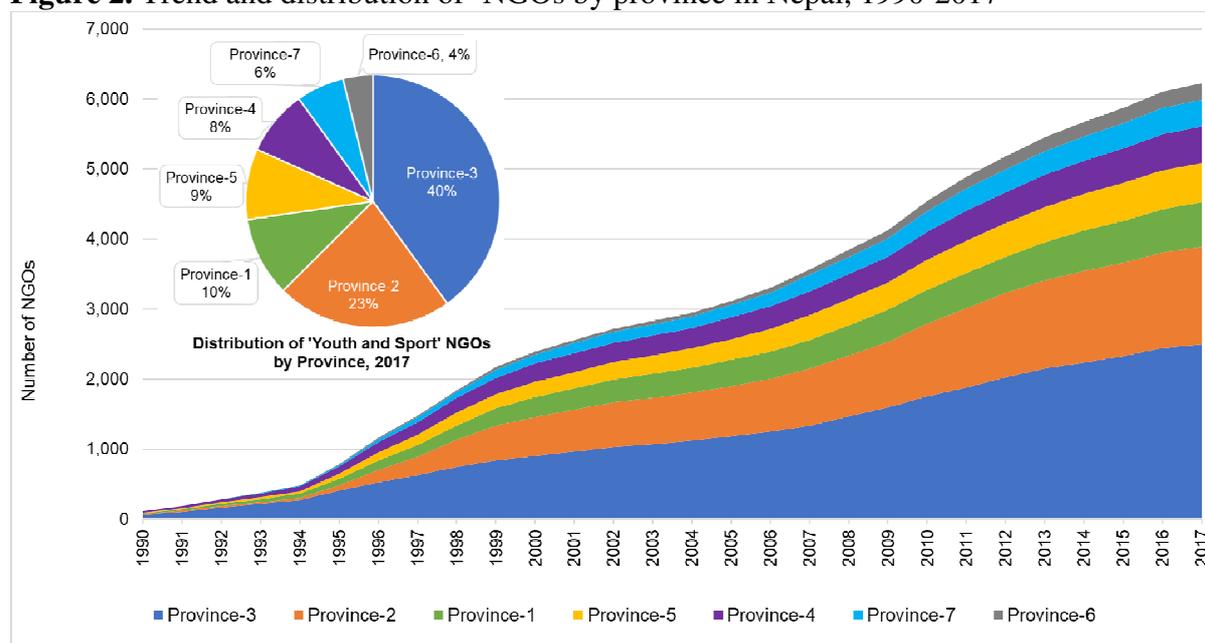
‘Youth and sport’ NGOs have a huge potential to contribute to development goals of Nepal where the proportion of youth is higher than the other age groups and where the ‘youth and sport’ NGOs are proliferating. In the ‘Youth Vision 2020’, Government of Nepal defines 15–40-year olds as the youth, and 40% of total population of the country belongs to this age group (Government of Nepal, 2015a; CBS, 2014). Similarly, the core youth age group is the 15–24-year olds which account for more than 20% of the total population. As most of the NGOs in the area of ‘youth and sport’ target this age group, their development significantly contributes to the overall progress of the country. The focus of their youth development, sports, and physical activity programs mostly go to underdeveloped areas and communities where many people live in multidimensional poverty. Evidence shows that impacts of such poverty and other indicators of underdevelopment are higher on youth than adults, and youth population is more vulnerable in natural disasters, external shocks and other adverse situations (Flynn, 2008; Collingwood, 1997).

Since Nepal has just transformed from a centrally controlled monarchy into a full-fledged federal democratic republic creating seven autonomous provinces, we disaggregated the results into seven provinces as shown in Figure 2. Province-3 is located in the central part

of the country along with the capital city Kathmandu, and it holds the highest number (i.e., 2,495) of 'youth and sport' NGOs which is nearly 40% of the total. Similarly, the second most 'youth and sport' NGOs go to Province-2 accounting for 23% followed by Province-1 with 10%, Province-5 with 9%, and Province-4 with 8%. As Province 6 and 7 are the most remote parts and have the lowest levels of development indicators than the other provinces, they have the lowest proportion of 'youth and sport' NGOs at 6% and 4% respectively.

Although more impoverished and more disadvantaged regions hold fewer overall as well as 'youth and sport' NGOs, it should be noted that most NGOs located in the capital city Kathmandu have broader coverage, some even have national coverage. They usually target the population in the underdeveloped areas. Also, many NGOs are established by migrants from different parts of the country to the capital who support people and communities in their hometown. For instance, some people coming from *Manaslu* mountain area of *Gorkha* district in mid-Western Nepal established the Manaslu Conservation Club in Kathmandu in 1994 to help protect the mountain. While Kathmandu-based *Youth Vision Nepal* involves in health, education and income generation activities in various parts of the country, *Rashtriya Yuwa Khelkud Manch* (National Youth Sports Forum) helps young people to develop their sporting skills. Although the significant role of sports in community development and in enhancing social inclusion is already established in the literature (Sherry et al., 2016), the private sector is not likely to serve the backward areas (Ascher et al., 2016). Therefore, policymakers should encourage and mobilize 'youth and sport' NGOs in the process of achieving socioeconomic development goals.

Figure 2. Trend and distribution of 'NGOs by province in Nepal, 1990-2017



Source: The authors' creation using the data collected from the SWC of Nepal Government.

Notes: The respective Provincial Parliament will decide the name of the provinces.

NEPAL'S 'YOUTH AND SPORT' NGOS IN THE GLOBAL SDP DIRECTORY

Despite the rapid growth of 'youth and sport' NGOs in Nepal, we found only 16 NGOs appeared in the global SDP directories as of March 2018. As shown in Table 2, two SDP organizations use Football (Soccer) as a means of development, and each of three organizations uses basketball, cricket, table-tennis for achieving the development objectives. Rest has no particular sports focus instead use multiple sports. It must be noted that most of these organizations receive some form of support from donor agencies or international SDP organizations. For example, *Game On! Youth Sports Nepal* gets support from the

International Alliance for Youth Sports. All these organizations use different sporting activities to uplift lagging behind groups of people in the society, particularly in rural areas. There are also many empowering sporting activities targeting women, disabled youth and children, and deprived caste and ethnic groups.

Table 2. Nepal’s ‘youth and sport’ NGOs in global SDP directories

Organizations (With web link, if available)	Types of Sport -Key SDP Programs/Projects/Activities
1 Equal Access Nepal http://equalaccess.org.np/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple sports – Health and nutrition; women empowerment
2 Global Action Nepal http://globalactionnepal.org/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple sports – Play for a positive change – Promoting the girls’ participation in sport
3 Childreach Nepal http://www.childreachnepal.org/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple sports – Sports initiative program
4 ENGAGE: Toward an Inclusive Society http://www.engage.org.np/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple sports – Training on wheelchair basketball; – Professional Development for SDGs
5 Kathmandu Academy of Football http://www.kaffootball.com.np/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Football (Soccer) – Football training for life skills
6 National Physical Disabled T1 Association https://www.facebook.com/NPDTTAN/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Table tennis – Training to disabled people, advocacies, and awareness
7 Integrated Effort for Development, Nepal http://www.iednepal.org.np/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple sports – Sport for youth development
8 Cricket Association of The Blind, Nepal http://www.cabnepal.com/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cricket – Empowering blind girls and boys via cricket
9 Empowering Women of Nepal https://empoweringwomenofnepal.wordpress.com/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Outdoor pursuits, adventure tourism – Girls leadership training – Female trekking guide training
10 Blue Diamond Society, Nepal http://www.bds.org.np/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple sports – Sport to tackle stigma against LGBTI
11 Go Sports Nepal https://www.facebook.com/Gosportnepal/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple sports – Education through sports – Sport for social development
12 Magic Bus Nepal http://www.magicbus.org/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple sports – Sport for poverty eradication – Education through sports
13 Big Bang Ballers Nepal http://bigbangballers.org/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basketball – Use basketball to fight youth poverty and social disadvantage
14 Game On! Youth Sports, Nepal http://beyondsport.org/project/g/game-0n/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple sports – Sport for youths in remote villages – Culminate potentiality of underprivileged
15 Garuda Sports Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Football (Soccer) – Football for the underprivileged children – Providing sporting equipment
16 Move 4 New Horizons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple sports – Sport for education to <i>Dalits</i> children – Sport for Social Inclusion

Source: Authors’ compilation of the data and information from Beyond Sports Network database, sportanddev.org, and websites of the respective SDP organization.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

On the footing of MDGs experiences, United Nations General Assembly adopted the ‘2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ on 25 September 2015. The 2030 Agenda aims to ‘transform our world by 2030’ with 17 new goals (United Nations, 2015). Notably, the paragraph ‘37’ of the report emphasizes the importance of sports for development and peacebuilding as (United Nations, 2015, p.10):

Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognise the growing contribution of sport to the realisation 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.

How do policymakers in Nepal respond to such strong global acceptance of sports as an ‘important enabler of sustainable development’ and clear recognition of sports’ growing contribution towards development and peace outcomes? We tried to get answer in the following three major policy and planning documents: a) Nepal’s ‘Fourteenth Plan (2016/17–2018/19)’ which provides detailed strategies and policies to achieve the national SDGs and other socioeconomic agendas (NPC, 2017), b) ‘Youth Vision 2025’ which covers both youth and sport sector, and c) ‘National Youth Policy 2015’ which also covers both youth and sports. We need to analyze several policy documents because there is no specific national independent ‘SDP policy’ or even ‘sports policy’ introduced yet despite high demand from the stakeholders.

We found that there is no clear SDP policy set in any of the policy documents. It must contain such policy if the government recognizes the SDP sector as one of the contributors to development outcomes. The ‘Youth Vision 2025’ and the ‘National Youth Policy 2015’, primarily focus on youth development and fails to formulate any organized SDP policy. Within the limited focus on sport, most of the policy guidelines aim to address the challenges of sport development rather than SDP. For instance, under the ‘2.7 Directive Policy’ of the first policy document, pages 10–11 outline the eight guiding principles of the policy, and one of them explicitly states as follows (Government of Nepal, 2015a, p. 10).

Common affluence, sustainable development and peace are the route of progress for the new generation. This principle believes in protecting the nature and environment and transferring the same to the coming generation. It lays stress on the Millennium development goals, sustainable development and youth participation in the implementation of international commitment regarding global environmental change. Directing the programs towards conflict management, this principle shall incorporate a peace sensitive approach.

Other principles include ‘Social Justice and Equality’, ‘Inclusion and Equitable Development’, ‘Guarantee of Rights and Realization of Obligations’; all are very useful for SDP sector as well. Despite such a poor focus, there are some SDP policies found in the ‘Youth Vision 2025’. Sport-related policies are grouped as ‘Sport and Entertainment’ not recognizing ‘sport’ as an independent sector. However, policies that use sport for health and educational development are outlined on page 34 of the document. The Ten Year Strategic Plan states “... expand sports to the school level located in the rural areas with a view to interlinking it with the physical and mental health of the common youths”. A similar policy is found in the ‘National Youth Policy 2015’ (see page 14). Similarly, both policy documents focus on promoting *sports tourism* and *adventure sports* as a contributor to employment generation, local development, and economic growth similar as in the ‘Fourteenth Plan’.

Notably, ‘Youth Vision 2025’ clearly states, “... develop and expand Sports for enhancing peace, unity, caste and regional tolerance and national prestige” (p. 34) as one of the sectoral strategies of ‘Sports and Entertainment’. This policy can contribute to achieving

social inclusion and justice. Moreover, ‘Youth Vision 2025’ has another SDP relevant policy that guides to organize national and international friendly sports events for “promoting consensus, collaboration and amicability among the youth of the country and abroad” (p. 36), which contributes to promoting international cooperation.

Similarly, the ‘National Youth Policy 2015’ emphasizes gender empowerment and social inclusion through organizing sports to increase female participation across different caste and ethnic groups, people from diverged areas and people with disability to promote inclusive development (Government of Nepal, 2015b, pp. 14–15).

Overall, our findings suggest that policy environment in Nepal is not encouraging for ‘youth and sport’ NGOs to help to establish the SDP sector and contribute to development outcome effectively. Unfortunately, the country even has no comprehensive ‘sports policy’ yet despite the acute need for inexpensive and effective development means in LDCs like Nepal. Undoubtedly, sports can serve as one of these means, which is proven to be more effective where the socio-cultural diversity is very high (Schulenkorf & Sugden, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This paper explored the grassroots ‘youth and sport’ NGOs of Nepal. It also assessed the extent to which the government policy is well organized in line with the established knowledge and good practices and the United Nations’ strategies and other efforts to mobilize sports to contribute to peace and development. We find the rapid growth of ‘youth and sport’ NGOs in the last few decades increasing from 122 in 1990 to 6,230 in 2017. Arguably, these NGOs can be mobilized at the community to national level effectively, which can serve as a bridge between the grassroots communities and the government, and potentially emerge as strong ‘*sport for development and peace*’ (SDP) organizations. They can even link the local people to the international donor community efficiently if a favorable policy environment exists. Indeed, a very few of them are active in the sport for development activities contributing to the national *sustainable development goals* (SDGs), and some of them are already a part of the global SDP organizational network.

However, despite United Nations lead global SDP initiatives, numerous scholarly evidence of the positive impact of sports on peace and development indicators, and growing SDP organizations at global and national levels, policymakers are found to be unaware about the sport’s potential for peace and development in Nepal. In fact, SDP is not acknowledged as a potential sector, which can significantly contribute to SDGs achievement. Consequently, policymakers have not been able to make appropriate policy so far even though Nepal is very active in following the SDGs movement. As sport is a rational and cost-effective means to development, it is highly beneficial to follow the SDP movement in a country like Nepal where socio-cultural diversity and development disparity are very high. Thus, we suggest further research on these growing NGOs to explore their prospects and potential roles in peace and development.

Furthermore, policymakers seem to be unaware of the concept of SDP and other related aspects because it is a newly emerged sector in the field of international development. Therefore, some training with the knowledge of best practices around the world and exposure to some successful SDP projects can motivate and empower them to develop a comprehensive national SDP policy that can significantly contribute to achieving the SDGs.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Jeet Bahadur Sapkota is an Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Tsukuba, Japan. He holds Ph.D. in International Studies specializing in development studies from Waseda University. His research interests revolve around the sport for development, sustainable development goals (SDGs), rural infrastructure, and development impacts of globalization.

Dr. Pramila Neupane is an Assistant Professor at the Center for Education of Global Communication (CEGLOG) at the University of Tsukuba, Japan. She also serves as an Adjunct Professor at the Faculty of International Liberal Arts at Dokkyo University, Japan. She holds Ph.D. in International Studies specializing in educational development from Waseda University, Japan. Her research focuses on educational development, socioeconomic issues in education in developing countries, and teaching English as a second/foreign language.