

## **ANALYSIS OF SPORTS AS TOOL FOR PEACEBUILDING AND COMMUNITY COHESION IN POST-CONFLICT REGION OF SWAT, PAKISTAN**

Dr. Noor Elahi<sup>1</sup>

### **ABSTRACT:**

*The militant conflict in Swat valley of Pakistan during 2005-2009, followed by Pakistan military operations highly influenced the social relations, trust and cohesion among different social and ethnic classes. This research focuses on how the sports interventions carried out in post conflict development of Swat valley have contributed in peace building and reviving the trust of conflict affected community. Semi structured interview, focused group discussion and participatory observation methods were applied for primary data collection. The findings show that summer and winter sport festivals started by Pakistan army with the help of provincial government and national and international NGOs have contributed to reducing tension, uncertainty and revival of social cohesion among different groups of people. The community was highly satisfied with sports initiatives because the outsider players, media and NGOs presented the soft image of the Swat valley. Allocation of regular budget and management of sports activities may be made compulsory under the reconstruction interventions in post crisis regions.*

**Keywords:** Sports, peacebuilding, social cohesion, post-conflict development, Swat valley

### **INTRODUCTION:**

A war torrent society like Pakistan cannot afford social disintegration due to sectarian violence, extremism and terrorism and continues economic problems inherited from the very beginning which placed the country on back foot. Moreover, the changing scenario in international politics and geo strategic location of the country introduced the curse of terrorism in the country after 9/11 incident. Pakistan faced many problems of militant conflict e.g. the promotion of culture of Kalashnikov and

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Development Studies, CUI, Abbottabad Campus. E-mail: [noorelahi@cuiatd.edu.pk](mailto:noorelahi@cuiatd.edu.pk)

Talibanization through Mujahideen in Afghan war with Russia (Hussain, 2007), and most notably the religious movements such as Tehrike Nifaze Shariat-e-Muhammdi (TNSM) by Fazlullah and Sufi Muhammad in Malakand division. The conflict in Swat valley is the result of socio political as well as religious phenomenon (Elahi, 2015; Fleischer, 2011).

After the terrorist attack on world trade center on 9th September 2001, the militants from Afghanistan spread in different part of Pakistan. Pakistan during the last decade has remained one of the conflicts as well as natural disaster affected country, and the consequences of these disasters have affected the social and cultural system of the country. The insurgent groups all over Pakistan and most notably in Ex-FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) were active in militancy and terrorism. Since 2005, Swat; a northern district of KP Pakistan, has been affected by violent conflict and natural disaster. The followers of TNSM start to challenge the writ of government after their strong foothold in Swat district.

This affects the socio-economic relations of the people (UNDP, 2011). The conflict created many socio-economic problems most notably social disintegration, distrust and psychological problems in the region (Bangash, 2012). The crises created uncertainty among the community and due to internal displacement of the people many people lost their properties, businesses, and agricultural as well as industrial products. These, militant have direct impact on social relation and cohesion of the people. However, conflict in Swat is not intertribal but the differences between lower class and landlords have been created during conflict and majority of the lower classes welcomed the militant (Rome, 2009). Moreover, tourism sector highly disturbed, this created economic problems among the poor and lower class in the region. The Pakistan army operation "Rah-e-Rast" (straight path) against the militant in 2009, and following a devastating flood in 2010, caused displacement of about and 2.3 million people from the Malakand division including 1.2 million from Swat only, which

created high disturbance in the daily social life of the community in Swat. Further, these consequences put psychological effects, disturb the social relationship of the community and influence the values of trust not only among different classes and ethnic groups but also between the government and local population. After Pakistan military operation in 2009 against the militant, many development initiatives have been taken by the government and nongovernmental organizations to rehabilitate the local community. The resettlement of the displaced population and revival of government writ was the priority. The initiatives such as poverty reduction, sustainable livelihood, health, education, social justices have been taken to bring social cohesion, peace and to reduce social difference which was created during conflict. Sport is one of these rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives started by Pakistan army and non-governmental organization to revive the trust of local and outsiders on the region.

On one occasion, Nelson Mandela stated that ‘Sport has the power to change the world, the power to inspire, the power to unite people in a way little else can’. For many years sport has been considered as an important technique that contributes to feel national identity, social cohesion and communal pride (Schulenkorf, 2011). Sport is any physical activity that contributes to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. Sport is considered as one of the recognized methods for social inclusion, conflict resolution and peacebuilding in a region affected by poverty and conflict (Cardenas, 2012). It is considered as a low start up and common language which is known everywhere in the world.

National and international responses have planned and carried out several interventions to bridge the gap and reduce the mistrust as well as to regain the confidence of the people. There is no simple way to bring the fragmented community into cohesive society, reduce inequalities and discrimination as well as to revive the peace. However, Sports are considered as “low start up” to bring peace and reconciliation in conflict affected areas. The study

was conducted to identify how the rehabilitation and reconstruction activities carried out particularly sports as a fruitful initiative in terms of peacebuilding and social cohesion in conflict affected societies. Sport festivals both in summer and winter organized by Pakistan army and provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Swat valley was the part of the rehabilitation and reconstruction interventions. The argument is that sport maintains a universal language which is practiced and known equally with in all the culture of the world. Therefore, sports may play an effective role in bridging the gap created through conflict between different social and ethnic groups. The research focused to identify the ways that how conflict affected the social cohesion and relations in Swat valley of Pakistan. Moreover, the study intends to document how the sports activities contributed in reviving the trust and reducing social differentiation and overall peacebuilding in the conflict affected regions of Swat valley.

### **The context of sports and peacebuilding**

Sport has a universal language and shared by all the people around the world without any discrimination of race religion, ethnicity and nationality. During the so called “Olympic truce” it brings the individuals and culture together in the event in peace. The exchange of different ideas among different people around the world during major sport events promotes understanding among different nations. Sport was used as a goodwill gesture before 1939 (Vincent et al, 2011).

To understand the role of sport in peacebuilding it is important to understand what peacebuilding is. As there are many possible definitions of the term peacebuilding, it is defined as the set of strategies designed to promote a secure and stable lasting peace in which the basic human needs of the population are met, and violent conflicts do not recur (Lambourne, 2004).

John Galtung (1964) first time used the term peacebuilding and emphasized on the creation of structure of peacebuilding for sustainable peace through eliminating the root causes of conflict.

Cardenas, (2013) stated that Galtung highlighted three different approaches i.e. resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation of people and places for peacebuilding after violent conflict. Peacebuilding incorporated as a part of United Nations official language in 1992 when this term was utilized by the former UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali in his annual speech on “An agenda for peace”. This term was expressed by him as an action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict (Barnett et al, 2007). German foreign policy context in 2004 defined as an action plan on civilian crisis prevention (Gravingholt et. al, 2009). According to Brahimi Report (2000), peacebuilding defined as activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war. Peace is an intangible thing and not possible to quantify. In addition to that it is defined as the presence of justice or the absence of war, act of terrorism and random violence. It cannot be achieved in some days if already exists and change constantly. One can only find or create ways and expend it in our daily life to achieve peace (Salazar, 2006).

In 2003, the first Magglingen International Conference on sport for development and peace took place, which introduced new chapter in peace promotion process and development sector in the world. The year 2005 was declared as a year for sport and physical education while in 2008 during the ceremony of Olympic Games, international community ratified sport to promote development and peace in the world (Cardenas, 2012).

Sport influences social behavior beyond the playing field and it plays a positive role in human social development by providing socially approved standards of behavior which not only influence the socializations process at local or national level but also between the nations (Sugden, 2010). According to Giulianotti (2011), many local and international organizations use sports to bring peace and reconciliations among communities during and

after conflict. In this way sports have been observed as a recognized method of intervention in disadvantaged communities mostly in developing world as it plays roles as a catalyst for social inclusion, conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the regions effected by poverty and conflict (Cardenas, 2012). In 2000 International Olympic Truce Foundation (IOTF) was established by IOC with the help of Greek government. The main purpose of the foundation was to promote peace, friendly relation and mutual understanding through sport in conflict affected areas and also to ensure that the dispute between different communities does not prevent the youth to participate in Olympic Games (IOC, 2012).

Sport is used as an agent for social change in refugees' camps in conflict affected areas of Guinea, Kenya, Kosovo, Nepal, Rwanda, and Tanzania with the collaboration of IOC and UNHCR (ibid). The success of this approach utilized by IOC tells about the positive role of sport in normalizing the daily life of people. It is also used as a tool to bring peace and harmony among ethnically hostile nation such as in Bosnia Herzegovina and Iraq (Leszek, 2008). Armstrong (2004) stated that in Liberia during football tournament the armed rebels laid down their weapons to watch and participate in the tournament. He hoped that football and other sport activities are best alternative opportunities to stop the youth to be engaged in harmful activities or militias.

Swat conflict severely damaged infrastructure, agriculture and socio-cultural life of the people. The government institution with the help of international organization started to rehabilitate the affected community and rebuild infrastructure (Bangash, 2012). Many army personals were deployed in the region and the government also established an "Aman committee" with the help of local people to avoid such incidence in future. To reduce the grievances of the local people many projects in health sector, agriculture sector and educational sector also started. Moreover, to reduce the threats from the minds of the people and to show the soft image of the district and provide a platform for the youth to express their abilities in more positive way. Pakistan army with the

help of provincial government and some international organization e.g. UNDP started sport activities in the region (UNDP, 2012).

### **Historical background of the study area**

The study was conducted in district Swat, of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan affected by both the military conflict and flood in 2009 and 2010 respectively. Swat valley is situated about 177 km in the north of Islamabad and its total area is about 5,337 km<sup>2</sup>. Swat district is divided in six tehsils named Barikot, Babuzai, Charbagh, khwazakhela, Kabal, Bahrain and Matta (UNDP, 2012). According to 2017 census total population of Swat is above two million with an annual growth rate of 3.37percent. Swat is a hilly area, and it is bordered by Chitral and Gizar districts in the North, Kohistan and Shangla districts in the East, Malakand and Buner in the South and by the districts of Lower and Upper Dir in the west.

Main clans settled in Swat were Dardic and Pukhtoon (Swathes, Dalasi). Historically this region has witnessed different regimes and rulers e.g. Persian empires, Mahmood Ghazis, the Huns, Mughals, the British and various local rulers such as Khans, Akhunds and Wali (Rome, 2005). Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism remained as the main religions of the region. Different languages e.g. Pashto, Persian and Sanskrit have remained official languages of the region. Pashto is the dominant language spoken and understood by 93percent of local people (Bangash, 2012).

### **Methodology**

The study is based to identity the relationship of the sport with improvement in peace through creation of healthy minds. However, it is difficult to quantify human behavior and their social relation (Hancock et. al., 2009). Therefore, this research is based on qualitative approach and depends on both primary and secondary data. Qualitative technique focuses on description and interpretation of the phenomenon. Cross sectional study design is used for data collocation because cross sectional study based on observational data in which researcher collect information without manipulating the environment. In this design the researcher does

not influence the behavior of the respondent and support to collect more relevant and unbiased information.

Field survey is carried out in the prominent area of Malam Jaba, Kalam and Saidu Shareef and Mingora Swat, which are the hub of sports activities and festivals. In the first phase the data was collected by approaching different stakeholders i.e. governmental and nongovernmental institutions, sports federation/associations and sport clubs working to promote peace in the region through different sports activities. In the second phase of the study the general community has been approached to collect firsthand knowledge and exact information. The survey was conducted through both the open and close ended questionnaire and participatory observations. Furthermore, three focus group discussions were also conducted in the selected areas to acquire more accurate information by involving more participants in the discussion. An approximately 96 respondents were selected for the study including 60 respondents from the community, 20 government and NGOs officials, and 16 respondents were selected from different sports federations and clubs. The proportion of sample was as following.

**Table 1:  
Structure and Sample in the Study area**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Strata</b>	<b>Sample</b>
1	Household (local community) including players from different areas	60
2	Sport associations	8
3	Local Sport clubs	8
4	Government and NGOs officials involved in sports activities	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>

Primary data was collected through fieldwork using different tools such as semi-structured interviews held with 96



respondents including government and NGOs official involved in sports interventions, sports federation, school and college students and general public from the study area (see table 1 for detail). Three focused group discussions one each with community, football players and sports club and association were conducted. Besides, participatory observation method was also applied to document the events while visiting different regions and attending sports activities in Swat district. The discussions and analysis are based on the responses collected from various respondents during the field work.

## **Result and analysis**

### **Traditional and modern sports in Swat**

Swat is a place which is not only famous for its natural beauty, but it is a place which produced highly talented sports man who are representing Pakistan. Sport is most favorite hobby of the people and they used to play different games and consider it as the best platform of fun as well as social interactions. There are many sports clubs such as Swat Red club, Swat cricket fun club, Swat football association and Swat hockey association registered as well as non-registered working to promote sport in the region.

Almost every types of sports game is played in Swat depend on the availability of the infrastructure and facilities. The people of Swat used to play different local and traditional games from very ancient time. The people living in hilly areas e.g. Malam Jaba and Kalam used to play volleyball, badminton etc. which required small space. While in larger town such as Saidu Shareef, Mingora and Kabhal etc. the youth play cricket, football and Hockey due to availability of big playgrounds. Other famous games, hockey, horse racing, tug of war, motorcycle racing, tip cats boxing, table tennis, snooker, squash, skiing as well as some traditional games e.g. *Pat patoone* (Hide and seek), *chandru* (hat squash) are played and liked in Swat. The women in Swat loved to play indoor traditional games e.g. *Takai*, *Pat Patoney* and *Patograme*, (Hide and

seek), *Tikan* and *Chandru* (hat squash) etc. which does not needs proper infrastructure. While in schools, colleges and at university level annual sport activities are part of curriculum for both girls and boys supported by the government and national and international non-governmental organizations as well as by associations e.g. district football associations and cricket clubs. Although, the involvement of women in sport activities in Pakistan and specifically in Swat is very low and due to cultural restraints cannot take parts in open ground sport activities.

According to the survey 34 percent of respondents like to play cricket, while 29 percent people like to play football. These two games are famous in the whole district and are played in different areas as well as in school and colleges annual sports competition. Volleyball and badminton are also played by female due to availability of separate ground facilities at some schools and colleges.

According to the local elders, football was introduced by Main Jahan Zeb (State ruler) when he came back from England in early 1950s. After merger of Swat state with Pakistan, a very beautiful Hockey turf in Saidu Sharif and Skiing resort of international level in Malam Jaba have been constructed. The Taliban ruling led by Mulla Fazlullah during 2005-2009 strictly ban the sport activities in the district. About 80 percent respondents were of the view that during Taliban period the sport activities were halted, if they found someone in the ground playing sport in uniform, they punished them. The conflict of Swat disturbed this beautiful activity of fun as well as social interaction at all level. Children, youth and female all affected equally. According to the president of football association a person was killed by Taliban in Grassy ground at early morning because he was running and wearing short dress, as it was unethical according to Taliban. Similarly, none of the sports activities has been conducted in school and colleges during the Taliban period. These situations highly disturbed the social life of the people in the region. After Pakistan military operation against Taliban in 2009, currently the situation is

moving towards normalcy due to valuable initiatives by government as well as by Non-Governmental organizations.

The leisure time activities of the people in Swat identified as that more than 57 percent male and 15 percent female are playing different games in their leisure and free times. While 45 percent women are working at home when they are free in comparison to 14 percent male and similarly about 21 percent male and 25 percent female visits relatives and friends in their free times. The rest of seven percent male keep busy himself watching television, going outside to market, while some reading different books and magazine of their interest. However, this is only practiced among educated people. About 15 percent female answered that they watch television or visits markets or go outside with their family to pass their free time.

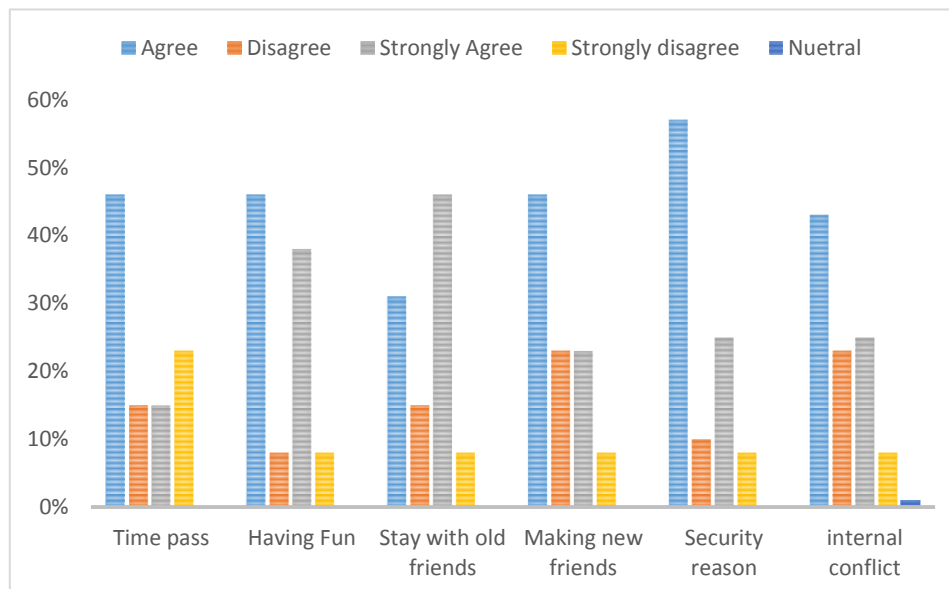
According to female respondents the Pashtun culture didn't allow female to play in open ground in front of many male and female spectators. Therefore, most of the female used to play traditional games inside the house or closed area. The survey under this research shows that 80 percent male and 65 percent female like to be a part of sport activity either supporting their favorite teams are watching them playing in the field or on television and the remaining 20 percent male and 35 percent female don't like to take interest in sport activities. It shows the people generally like sports activities in the district. However, some people they don't like sport activities because they perceived that sports keep the youth from productive work e.g. studying, cattle grazing, food bringing from market and helping their parents in domestic work and other earning activities. The Taliban were not in the favor of sports because they were of the view that sports leads the youth towards vulgarity. Therefore, they strictly banned on sports activities specially for girls. They also banned to play in sport's uniform as they considered it against Islamic culture and values. They mostly used to come in the ground during matches and asked whether the player have offered their prayer or not? This attitude of Taliban created a kind of panic in the society and destroyed the beautiful culture of sport and gathering. However, the situation is normal now and many mega sport activities

have been conducted after successful operation by Pakistan army, civil government and NGOs.

The females are not legged behind from male in any profession. However, due to some social and cultural barriers female participation in sport activities in Pakistan generally and in Swat specifically is very negligible. The main reason of low participation in this regard is the non-availability of proper facilities and resources.

From the survey it has been revealed that if proper sport facilities are provided to female their participation in different indoor as well as outdoor games will increase in the Swat valley. The opinion of the respondent was sorted out on Likert scale about sports activities in Swat district. The Figure 1 explain the individual responses of the male and female respondents regarding participation and hindrance in sports activities.

**Figure No. 1**  
**Opinion of male and female respondent about**  
**Sport in Swat district**



Source: Field survey conducted in May 2016.

Talking about participation in outdoor sports activities some of the female respondents were of the view that outdoor sport activities are against our social and cultural values. However, they agreed that the main purpose of their participation in sport activities are for time pass, to have fun, making new friends as well as spending times with old friends. Whereas, the vulnerable security issues are also hindrance in their way, about 57 percent female respondents agree that due to lack of proper security assurance they don't like to participate in outdoor sport activities. It revealed that proper facilities and security assurance can enhance female participation in sport activities which is very important for healthy society. Although, when a female expresses their desire to participate in sports activities, the male family member dislike it and sometime their disliking may lead to violence and this leads to internal conflict.

### **Sport, Social harmony and social cohesion**

Sport is considered as an effective tool to promote peace and harmony in the society. It has the potential to contribute in social cohesion and social change. It is very important to bridge the gap between various stakeholders in conflict affected society to ensure positive peace and create trust and mutual understanding (Dorokhina et al, 2011). This study identified that sports interventions in post conflict development have contributing role in creating harmony among different ethnic groups and social classes. About 90 percent male and 85 percent female responded that sport is playing effective role to promote social harmony in the society. It creates awareness and develops passions and skill among the participants to resolve their issues and manage their conflict. During focus group discussion it is revealed that the people now realized that sport has the ability to keep unite different groups and strengthen social bonds and develop connection between peers and adults. It keeps busy the people in healthy activities and develop sound mind therefore promote the culture of respect, cooperation

and acceptance. The findings reveal that people love to participate and watch sports festivals. They came from far-flung areas of Swat to support their respective players and to enjoy the sports events. This shows that sports were playing positive role in social cohesion. During the conflict this positive role of sports have been denied through forced banning and threats.

However, some male and female viewed sports negative in term of social harmony and peace. According to them sport is a cause of internal conflict because when a child spent whole of his time in sport activities and not able to meet their daily work of studies as well as domestic responsibilities, then conflict arise between parents and children. In addition to that sport also escalate conflict between two opposing team and this conflict not only limited in games but also disturb both the parties in their social life. There may be few cases but a well-organized and timely participation in sport activities can reduce the negative effects of sports. Moreover, outdoor sport game may impact positively to reduce the possibility of conflict because people from different background come together as participant and spectators, this leads to reduce differences through mutually shared interests.

### **Sport as a peacebuilding initiative:**

UN Security Council (2001) defined peacebuilding as 'preventing the outbreak, the recurrence or continuation of armed conflict'. This notion of peacebuilding means that sports not only keep the existing enemies away from war but also to address the root causes of the conflict in order to prevent the recurrence of the conflict. For this purpose, sports have been used in many regions as tool to promote peace and social cohesion as well as a source of reducing stress and healing trauma and reconciliation in conflict prone societies.

During Taliban period the people of the area had lost social trust and social integrity. There was a situation of uncertainty,

public gathering was very rare. After the successful operation by Pakistan army sport festivals started to revive the trust of the people and to reduce the fear of uncertainty. This to some extent has discouraged the negative attitude and perception. When the people saw the large number of gathering in Kalam festival all the prejudices of the people regarding the uncertain situation of the area reduced. The survey conducted in Swat reveals that 94 percent male and 80 percent female responded that sport has an important role in peacebuilding.

The government officials and sport's club members viewed sports as a tool which may develop relationship among different communities when they came together for a common cause and may be one of the most effective tools of reintegration, social interaction and heal social trauma. They agreed that all these positive impacts of sport help directly or indirectly to promote peace in a society. The social cohesion in turn brought the people together and created tranquility in the region. The seasonal sport festivals such as Kalam summer festival and Malam Jaba winter sports festival in the region played a significant role in the restoration of peace. Support and participation by the foreign embassies members in these festivals restored the trust of the local people and majority visitors from the country participated. People were happy and hoped that the future will be peaceful as it was in the old time.

The preamble to the constitution of UNESCO state that 'since war begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed'. To rebuild their life and to achieve sustainable peace in the region, peace may be induced in the minds of the people. The purpose of the sports festival in Swat region was to motivate the youth for changes in their mental wellbeing and to reduce their vulnerability toward militant mindset. Moreover, these sports' festivals disseminated messages to the targeted population effectively. In addition to that sport festivals i.e. skiing in Malam Jaba and Kalam festivals attracts

large number of foreigners and people from inside the country which displayed the soft image of Swat in Pakistan and abroad. The media coverage to these festivals further paved the ways for trust building among the Swati people as well as in the surrounding regions. The arrival of national players from different parts of Pakistan contributed to social cohesion and trust building of the outsiders in the region.

In April 2016, during football match of U-23 organized by Swat sport board, conflict arise between the people of Bilogram and Amankot. The spectator in the support of their team came inside the ground during match and the army personal canceled the match when the conflict became violent. After that the president of football association with the help of some elders resolves the issue and continues the match after two days break. The people told that irrespective their mutual relationships they became violent against each other due to sport. However, such kind of situation arises when there is lack of management from the organizer side. A well-organized event may discourage the negative effects of sport. Moreover, the proper time management by the youth for their daily activities also lead to demotivation towards militancy.

The perceptions of the people on the concept whether peace is necessary to promote sport or the sport itself brings peace. About 94 percent male and 90 percent female answered that to promote sport it is necessary to bring peace first while during armed conflict sport activities may dangerous in term of human losses. Their perceptions were in the context of Swat where the deadliest militancy and armed conflict never encourage anybody to be in playground to take part in sport activities. Therefore, in this condition the first required step is to restore peace, law and order situation than sport activities in order to discourage the youth from being involved in militant activities and to sustain peace.



### **Institutions and the promotion of peace through sport**

Since 2010, post conflict development initiatives in the form of rehabilitation and reconstruction have been initiated by government and non-governmental organizations in order to bring peace and development and also rebuild the effected institutions. A number of initiatives such as poverty reduction, sustainable livelihood, health, education, social justices and social welfare projects have been taken to strengthen social cohesion among different social and ethnic classes, to reduce social difference which was created during conflict and to revive the trust of the local people which effected due to conflict (Elahi et al., 2015). Although our focus is not these development initiatives but sport, which is one of these rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives started by Pakistan army with the collaboration of provincial government and non-governmental organizations e.g. Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), UNDP and Right to Play, Lasoona and Swat sport boards. All these organizations and government institutions conducted and supported different sport festivals to reduce the uncertainty in the region and review the lost trust. These initiatives not only become helpful to reduce the conflict but also showed the soft image of the conflict torn society to the whole world after conflict.

Sport festival i.e. “Spirit of Swat” was the first initiative which promote the soft image of Swat to the world. During festivals many people move towards Swat. Army personals, civil bureaucrats and media sectors as well as NGOs economically, socially and politically supported the continuation of sports festival in the Swat and viewed sports as a priority area in post conflict peacebuilding initiatives. Pakistan army also involved themselves in the sports activities to earn the trust of community. Organizing two seasonal sport festivals is not enough to build a nation however, to build a peaceful, cohesive and healthy nation. Therefore, sport activities may be included in the curriculum at school and colleges level. Although all the institutions and

community faced a number of constraints in arranging the sports activities at large scale.

### **Constraints in sport activities**

In Pakistan sport being a favorite activity of the masses but youth is still facing lots of social problems. Pakistan spending less than three percent on social services i.e. education, health, sport, art and culture while India spending 6.5 percent of their GDP on social services. Only Rs. 630.866 million have been allocated by Federal government for ongoing and new sports projects in the Public-Sector Development Programs (PSDP) 2016-17, while Rs.137 million has been allocated for the project of “holding national games” in the PSDP 2015-2016. Similarly, Rs. 1325 million has been allocated by government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in PSDP for 2014-15 (Economic survey, 2015-16). The sports boards and education department representatives viewed this amount as insufficient to promote sport in the whole province.

However, the new political government of KP since 2013 has initiated numbers of projects to develop sport activities at provincial and district level. Each district has been assigned a project of construction of sports complex, covering facilities of a number of games. Similarly, provincial government is also going to establish about 75 playgrounds at tehsil level out of which about 25 grounds have been completed. The provincial government also provides sport’s kits to the genuine and talented players in the province. Likewise, international level sport complex has been constructed in Abdul Wail Khan University Charade. These initiatives will be effectual for the development of sports in the region. In Swat, special sports funds have been allocated to school and colleges, and they are instructed to conduct annual internal sports games competition. The famous Grassy ground at Mingora city has been rehabilitated, and Malam Jaba skiing resort was reconstructed with support of US, Germany and Norway embassies.

This study identified a number of political constraints through government officials, sports board association, political

activists and NGOs respondents. Lack of political determination is one of the major obstacles in the promotion of sports. Policies and strategies are there to promote sport, but their proper implementation is lacking from the higher authority. Corruption and lack of awareness of sport among the concerned authority and political interference are the major obstacles to promote sport. Moreover, the political unrest, inconsistency in policies and unavailability of peace and wobbling situation, law and order are also causing declining in sport activities in Pakistan (Islam et al, 2014). Facilities both at community and institutions level is very rare. There is Swat sport boards and federations, however, lack of management and financial flow is the major constraints in provision of sports facilities. Swat being hilly area, there is very few grounds available in the district. Low fund allocation was the main constraint so as to provide maximum facilities at different parts of the Swat valley. Except few schools there are no proper sport ground and facilities available for both boys and girls in the district. That creates hurdles to promote sport activities at the grass root level. Similarly, the parents and elders of the society discourage their children to participate in sport activity. They considered sport as an unproductive activity and cause wastage of time. Female are highly discouraging to take part in outdoor sport activities due to cultural restraints. Girls in Swat are not appreciating to take part in sport activities. Nevertheless, the finding reveals that people of Swat love sport games and consider it is easy and low-cost technique to revive the trust and to rebuild the social and economic life of the people. Women participation in sport activities may reduce the negative stereotypes and discrimination and plays positive role in gender equality and women empowerment. There is need of proper fund and serious attention by government to arrange sport facilities including sport grounds, sport complex particularly at schools and college level. Awareness raising programs about the social, economic, cultural as well as physical and mental benefits of sport may be included in post conflict development policies by both public and private sector organizations. Coordination and cooperation is necessary between

all the stakeholders to continue organizing sports festivals peacefully and to sustain peace through sport in such conflict affected regions.

### **Conclusion**

Sport is considered as a new initiative to promote peace as well as social development without expensive infrastructure and top-down bureaucracy. Sport is used to promote peace and social cohesion in the region affected by poverty, injustice, inequalities and militancy. Swat has gone through one of the deadliest militant conflicts and flood crises. The conflict in Swat valley was the result of socio political and religious phenomenon. The conflict disturbed the socio-economic relationship of the people. After the military operation in 2009, many development initiatives in the form of rehabilitation and reconstruction have been initiated by government and non-governmental organizations in Swat district to bring social cohesion, to reduce social difference and to revive trust which was deteriorated during conflict. Sports was one of these initiatives to bring peace in the region.

The research aims to examine how sports activities contributed to peace in the conflict affected valley of Swat. Sport festivals regularly organized in Swat attracted many people from different part of Pakistan as well as from abroad and provided a best opportunity of social cohesion and cultural understanding. The sport festivals rebuild the trust of the local community, and thru the fear of gathering in public places. The festival also helped to show the soft image of Pakistan generally and Swat specifically in the world. Although, the available infrastructure and existing facilities to promote sport at gross root level in the region is very unsatisfactory. The available funds as well as the playgrounds to entertain the large majority of the population is very rare. Lack of facilities of playground in remote villages of Swat may not engage youth to utilize their leisure time in sports activities. Similarly, there is no proper facilities for girls, and due to cultural restraints, they are not allowed to play in open ground. In addition to this,

inadequate funds and non-serious attitude from government sector and political personalities is still causing failure to achieve positive role of sports. Collaboration was found among the stakeholders in conducting sports festivals and to use sport as a tool to promote peace, harmony and respect in this conflict affected region. The Government and nongovernment organizations need to focus on domestic competitions at village, Tehsil, district, and zone up to provincial level. These competitions not only bring the disintegrated society together but will help to produce new talent in the country. The most important is to ensure the security to national and international players in order to change the behavioral aspects of the youth and refrain them from involvement in militancy.

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