

# University of Gloucestershire

## Social Responsibility

### Sport Malawi – Change for Good

#### Section 1 About the project

##### Summary

Universities break new ground when they reach beyond the campus walls to tackle sustainability issues and lead practical change projects. The Sport Malawi programme at University of Gloucestershire (UoG) fulfils this ambition by using sport to fuel changes for economic development, poverty alleviation, health improvement, community building, and the promotion of justice for all.

##### Project partners

A crucial aspect of the project is the involvement of organisations within Malawi and many institutions provide support including;

- The Ministry of Sport
- National Council of Sport for Malawi
- National Malawi media
- Regional Education Departments and the three main Universities
- A variety of secular and faith-based indigenous organisations

The project has also received backing from the international charity WorldVision. A major coup for the initiative was its **partnership with the Malawi National Olympic Committee** and their decision to hold their pre-Olympic games training camp at UoG. Hosting elite Malawian athletes has raised the profile of Sport Malawi and placed the project firmly within view for all staff and students.

#### Section 2 The results

##### The problem

Universities break new ground when they reach beyond the campus walls to tackle sustainability issues and lead practical change projects. The Sport Malawi programme at University of Gloucestershire (UoG) attempts to tackle the issues of poverty alleviation, health improvement, community building, and the promotion of justice for all in one of the world's poorest nations while at the same time providing practical sustainability opportunities for both students and staff.

##### The approach

Sport Malawi combines the best principles of sustainability into a winning formula: an integrative approach (embracing social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainability challenges); the 'whole-institution' ethos that underpins UoG's Sustainability Strategy (uniting staff from across its academic and professional departments); and the focus on learning-based change (within the projects in Malawi and feeding directly



##### Profile

- HEI
- 9,000 students (includes full and part time students)
- 100 staff
- Urban



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back to the curriculum and into wider innovation in Education for Sustainability at UoG).

The key to the programme's success lies in its dynamic, engaged approach and ethos:

- using workshops and coaching sessions to establish the role sport can play as a vehicle for sustainability and social change and as an **entry point for thinking about equality, education and development**;
- placing **responsibility on UoG students** to 'train the trainers'- usually sports community workers, coaches, teachers, and youth workers;
- sharing techniques and skills to **show how development and education can be integrated** within sporting lessons and programs with a focus on youth, inclusion, health and HIV prevention;
- using the powerful medium of **sport to appeal to the key target audiences** – young Malawians - to date over 1450 Malawi participants have undertaken such a journey;
- providing the Malawian participants with new **skillsets they can adapt to projects in their local area** and the experience of seeing projects come to life and **bring real change to communities**.

## Our goals

Sport Malawi was established in 2008 by the UoG Chaplaincy Team and the Dept of Sports with the goal of encouraging **sport as a vehicle for sustainable development**. The project has been growing year on year and to date extending to many UoG professional and teaching depts.

## Performance and results

So far fifty UoG students and staff have participated in a programme where they have gained first-hand experience of new cultures; have deepened their understanding of sustainability in a real context; supported practical sustainable development initiatives and helped change the lives of young people in Malawi. Wide ranging benefits from the Sport Malawi project exist for all stakeholders including:

### Student Volunteers

- There are two key benefits for students undertaking the Sport Malawi expedition:
  1. The programme facilitates a **broadening of mindset and worldview** as they experience life in a developing country for the first time. It provides an opportunity to examine the **practical nature of sustainable development** and how they, as individuals, can interact with the concept - ideas that remain at the forefront of the mind on return to UoG.
  2. The ability of students to **act as catalysts for social change** through leading sport development workshops and addressing issues of HIV, education and improvement in quality of life.
- Other benefits that students have reported include an opportunity to **acquire new skills and knowledge** and apply their academic study in a new context and the great potential that exists for basing a **research project or dissertation** this sustainable development initiative. Elizabeth Annett, Sport Malawi Co-ordinator hopes to expand this idea further:

### Local Communities in Malawi

There are many benefits, both immediate and developmental, for communities where projects are based:

- Tangible benefits in **responding to real sustainability issues**, for example in public health promotion around issues of HIV and AIDS;
- The **building of a strong sense of community and purpose** through the collaborations and interaction generated through the projects;
- Ensuring the **long-term involvement and commitment** from an array of sport for outreach and development practitioners from diverse professions and backgrounds;
- **Upskilling and advancing knowledge** within local sport-for-development organisations – ‘training the trainers’;
- The **fostering of dialogue, idea-sharing and learning** relating to best practice in the field of sport and development;
- **Opportunities for scholarships to study at UoG** - green shoots are beginning to appear this academic year with the award of the first University scholarship to a Malawi national.

### UoG Staff

The benefits for staff involved in the programme are both personal and professional:

- The opportunity to **witness practical sustainable development concepts ‘in action’**, leading to a broadening of horizons and understanding of its scope and potential.
- Portable **examples, insights and new thinking to bring back and feed into the curriculum** across a range of programmes and in line with UoG’s emphasis on Education for Sustainability;
- **Increased professional development opportunities** with the chance of working abroad, undertaking research, teaching courses and helping to develop projects.
- **Improved professional motivation** through provision of new skills and new encounters, as well as seeing fresh connections between work, values and personal experiences.

### The University

The University gains significantly from the Sport Malawi initiative on several levels:

- Enriched opportunities to infuse **‘real world’ sustainability learning across the institution**, through the professional learning of both academic staff and those working in professional departments;
- Supporting its intention to forge **partnerships with a diverse range of external stakeholders** to help generate new innovation and strengthening the relevance of the curriculum to contemporary priorities;

Providing the opportunity to **forge and deepen its international links** and to bring global perspectives and new collaborative working potential to its operations;

The impact of Sport Malawi has been recognised nationally, when it won Gold at the prestigious Podium Awards in the ‘Innovative International Collaboration’ category. The project beat 200 other nominations across the FE and HE sectors, being acknowledged as “a tremendous example of how the power of the Olympic Games is being used to inspire people to make a real and lasting difference” by Paul Deighton, CEO of LOCOG.

## Section 3 The future

### Sharing your project

The Sport Malawi team has very ambitious plans for disseminating the project both internally and across the sector. Internally, the aim is to spread the word about Sport Malawi to students and staff outside the sports faculty in order to broaden the appeal and skill set of the project members for 2013. This will be



attained through presence at the Fresher's and International Student's Fayre and the involvement of the new chaplain and staff members from other faculties.

The 2012/13 academic year also marks the first time that Sport Malawi will be actively promoted and disseminated outside the institution. The recently returned 2012 Malawi trip was equipped with fifteen cameras that collected many hours of footage of the team's activities and experiences in country. This footage will be edited into a documentary by students at the UoG Media School over the coming semester. The aim is to use this film in a 'launch' event and conference for the project in Spring 2013. The idea behind this concept is to gather leading Sport for Development practitioners and other HE institutions who either run Sport for Development or Sports Outreach programs or are interested in doing so, in order to share ideas, advice and best practice.

Elizabeth Annett, one of the original co-ordinators of the project is embarking on a PhD based around a critical assessment of the Sport Malawi project at the University of Ulster in October 2012. This academic study will not only provide a robust analysis of the impacts and achievements of Sport Malawi but will also offer an excellent opportunity for disseminating the project at the University of Ulster and throughout the wider academic community through journal articles and publications.

### What has it meant to your institution to a Green Gown Award finalist?

"Being a finalist is a great way to recognise those individuals who have made the project such a success and ensure ongoing support from senior management. It also presents an amazing opportunity to share our learning with colleagues across the sector who have not heard of the project and have the opportunity to improve student's sustainability experience for real."

### Further information

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