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Mega-Sporting Events and Children's Rights and Interests – Towards a Better Future

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Abstract

The public subsidy of Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup hosting opportunities is invariably justified on the basis that they will secure a range of public good outcomes. Problematically, the information available inspires less confidence that these ambitions will be met and highlights how social costs and benefits are unevenly distributed. As a result, interest in the social dimension of hosting has grown, yet the knowledge to support responsive and evidence-based events policy remains relatively under-developed, particularly in relation to the specific needs and experiences of affected communities. The impact on children as a particularly stakeholder group reflects this context of recognition and knowledge gap. For example, while it is accepted that immovable deadlines and risk of reputational consequences raise a variety of social justice concerns throughout the event lifecycle, the nature and scale of these impacts on children is poorly understood and frequently mismanaged. Findings drawn from research commissioned by Terre des Hommes International Federation which explored the intersections between children's rights and social justice concerns highlights how such initiatives present risks and opportunities that cannot be managed effectively until children are included within associated planning processes as a specific stakeholder group with distinct needs and interests.

Keywords: Olympics, FIFA, Human Rights, Children, Mega-Events, Social Justice

Mega-Events and Children's Rights and Interests – Towards a Better Future

Introduction

Mega-Sporting Events (MSEs) are significant social occasions that provide politically important opportunities for public diplomacy, investment in targeted areas of need and collective celebration (Grix & Houlihan, 2014; Smith, 2014). They are also expensive, predominantly publically subsidised, disruptive interventions that play out in community spaces. These characteristics are important as the core justification for public funding is the generation of public good benefits, meaning that government's agreeing to underwrite MSE projects through the public purse are duty bound to deliver 'public good' outcomes and manage the associated impacts in the interests of *all* affected communities. Yet, while sound in theory, continuing debates about who really benefits from MSE projects and recurrent reports of hosting processes that fail to protect or promote the rights and interests of societies' most vulnerable demonstrates that the reality is somewhat different (Schausteck de Almeida *et al*, 2015). For aspirant host governments and event owners this issue is important because MSEs are developing a reputation for being socially irresponsible undertakings and, as a result, are failing to win the community support required for successful bids as demonstrated by referendums held in Boston, Oslo and Hamburg (Ramaswamy, 2015). For these communities, this development is, arguably, positive because it indicates the ability to exercise rights and inform important policy decision-making processes. However, this capacity is not equally enjoyed across the range of states seeking to host nor does it necessarily extend into the delivery phase once an event is awarded. Consequently, it is now recognised that MSE delivery processes require an embedded rights and interests framework that is capable of identifying and accommodating the positive and negative social potential of hosting for *all* affected communities (Morgan, 2016). Problematically, the knowledge to support such a responsive and evidence-based rights-orientated approach is still developing and does not accommodate the needs of all affected stakeholders comprehensively (Weed *et al*, 2012). Where children are concerned, the existing body of literature says very little, a paucity of information that presents children as invisible and suggests they have yet to be considered meaningfully as stakeholders within event processes. Consequently, relatively little is known about how event processes impact children's rights and interests and their profile within related discussions and planning activities is low. Broadening the 'lens' of the event debate to include children therefore offers important scope for expanding contemporary conceptualisations of the social potential of hosting projects as well as benefiting children in practical terms. This paper seeks to support this expansion by contributing to the development of current understandings of the social impacts of hosting through the presentation of selected findings of an evidence review, commissioned by international child

rights organisation Terre des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF)¹, that explored the intersection between children's rights and six established social justice issues (environment, housing, labour, LGBT, security and women) across the event lifecycle. This paper sets out these findings using the highly prominent themes in the events literature of labour and housing which are discussed following a contextualising review of events and children in contemporary society and the project's methodological approach. The paper concludes by offering some 'where to now' considerations for the development of a child-aware, more family and community orientated approach to mega-event delivery.

Mega-Sporting Events and Children's Rights in the Contemporary World

Discussion concerning children's rights inevitably must recognise the continuing debate within related discourses regarding 'universal' and 'relative' approaches to the standards and policies designed to achieve them (Bentley, 2005). This recognition is important as a central concern of these deliberations is the legitimacy of universal approaches, particularly when the concept of childhood is viewed as a socially defined construct influenced by time, place and culture. It is important because the implications of the standards developed have very real consequences for children as is illustrated by discussions of child labour which highlight how prohibitive measures may undermine their status as community members and limit their opportunities for inclusion in the decision-making processes that affect their rights and interests (Hanson & Vandaele, 2003). These debates also reflect how safeguarding tools which have been designed around 'universalising' models of childhood may be incapable of accommodating the diversity of childhood experiences, both in terms of rights enjoyed and denied, leaving related interventions (global to local) subject to processes of 'politics, negotiation and consensus' that are insufficiently child-centred or inclusive in terms of the range of areas in which children are important stakeholders (White, 1999: 134).

Concerns for processes to be appropriately child-centred inevitably invite questions as to what that looks like in practice. This consideration flows into a second feature of discussions concerning the relative nature of children's rights (which appreciably does not follow the conventional relativity debate). This draws attention to the fact that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is not limited to the rights that children have by virtue of their age, but also restates their broader *human* rights (Bentley, 2005). In terms of relativity, the key message of this discussion is that even where a minimal standard of rights is widely accepted, as demonstrated by the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (UNDHR), there is an additional need to restate them where they relate to children because enforcement is more challenging and the impacts of their abuse more damaging (Bentley, 2005). In working from the basis that the UNHCR and UNCRC are legitimate frameworks for discussing the rights and interests of children this research remains conscious that these legal instruments have been challenged as Western constructs which seek to impose

¹ TDHIF is a network of national organisations that work to advance children's rights and development MSEs are an explicit focus linked to their 'Children Win' Campaign launched in 2014. See <http://www.childrenwin.org/who-we-are/> and <http://www.terredeshommes.org/> for further information.

(hegemonically) a structure of regulations that may be inappropriate for non-Western contexts. When considering the potential efficacy of human rights instruments within a broad range of countries this challenge is clearly an important consideration. However, from an operational perspective and using country level reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (hereafter ‘the Committee’) as an indicator of the status of these legal instruments, it appears that weaknesses in the implementation of the Convention are less likely to be reported in terms of the illegitimacy of the right/s in question and more in terms of the difficulties inherent in operationalising them in unsupportive social contexts (Harris-Short, 2003). As such, what appears evident is a manifestation of the contemporary political structure in which a political elite representing the ‘state’ are making decisions for a society from which they are frequently disengaged, because, arguably, if it were otherwise then the social environment and the human rights obligations agreed would be more aligned. From this perspective, arguments which suggest that international human rights laws are a form of western imperialism have merit insofar as what appears to be occurring at the level of the political elite is a process of norm assimilation which has created a disjoint between them and the societies over which they govern and in this disjoint questions arise around the appropriateness of the obligations assumed. It appears that international human rights instruments are particularly challenged in this regard because they are a product of a state-to-state structure which does not accommodate social voices easily but have to be implemented at the level of the individual (Harris-Short, 2003).

The importance of the implications of discussion concerning the appropriateness of universal and relative rights based approaches to discussions concerning MSE hosting should not be underestimated, not least because impacts, opportunities and risks of hosting invariably reflect the context in which the event is delivered. However, as a widely acceptable resolution to these debates appears remote, the guiding principle adopted for this work draws on White’s (1999: 137) suggestion that progress is achievable via a ‘middle ground’ which uses the key messages as mechanisms to facilitate a critical review of ideals presented as universal and deeper consideration of the implications of general approaches to children as a specific community of interest. Working from this basis, the UNHCR and UNCRC are considered *relatively universal* with the acknowledgement that local contexts will influence both interpretation and implementation and this can be acceptable if the variation broadly aligns with the principles of the right or interest in question (Donnelly, 2007). The justification for this approach is that processes designed to improve children’s quality of life will only be effective if they recognise that children have an absolute need to be protected from harm, are capable of responding to their additional vulnerabilities and the diversity of childhood experiences, and are invested with the contextual sensitivity that ensures that associated interventions do not exacerbate risk or incidents of harm and disadvantage.

The ‘invisibility’ of children within MSE hosting processes suggests that current conceptualisations of the social potential of event hosting are incomplete in both positive and negative terms. However, as previously established this ‘invisibility’ is not unique to MSEs, children are recognised as among society’s most vulnerable stakeholder group and a significant feature of the disadvantaged experienced is the failure of existing policy processes

to effectively identify and respond to their rights and interests (CRAE, 2015). For example, policy approaches that adopt a general community level approach are likely to poorly serve children who are generally more sensitive to the impacts of social developments than the adult community and highly likely to be indirectly affected by impacts on their immediate family and wider community (Bartlett, 1999). MSE processes essentially reflect these broader social characteristics which overlay established concern for a range of event-related human rights issues that are evident across the event lifecycle (before, during and after) (Institute for Human Rights and Business, 2013). Collectively this means that MSE delivery processes have profound implications for children's rights and interest which are routinely poorly understood and, consequently, frequently mismanaged (Brackenridge *et al*, 2013). The absence of a child-aware focus in MSE planning and delivery processes is, therefore, a significant omission that contributes to the social irresponsibility of many hosting projects.

A socially responsible approach to MSE delivery is dependent on the unequivocal direction from event owners that this is a core criterion upon which the success of an event will be judged (Institute for Human Rights and Business, 2013). This is moving forward as can be seen in the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Agenda 2020 and FIFA's acknowledgement of its human rights responsibilities (Gibson, 2016; Olympic.org; 2014). However, as a relatively new direction of travel, it is equally clear from research and practitioner activity that although generally willing, those responsible for informing and managing delivery will need support if they are to understand the implications of delivery requirements and manage the related social risks and opportunities (Dowse, 2014).

The propensity for MSEs to disproportionately affect the most vulnerable members of host communities, together with the diversity of this experience, a lack of leadership on social responsibility and weaknesses in the delivery structures to achieve this are essentially the pillars of the problem when considering the situation of children as stakeholders in event processes. This, again, is not unique to MSEs. While governments across the world have undertaken to remedy children's recognised disadvantage through mechanisms like the UNCRC far fewer have established the leadership required to realise the associated responsibilities. The disadvantage targeted is therefore maintained by the consequential "invisibility [of children] within the machinery of government" which in practical terms results in policy processes that fail to identify children as a specific stakeholder group or accommodate their particular needs and interests (CRAE, 2015:2; Bartlett, 1999). This situation is then invariably reflected in MSE projects which, due to their scale and the public resources involved, are significantly delivered through national and local government structures. It is therefore unsurprising that the "invisibility" of children observed in government and policy practices extends to MSE hosting processes with similar consequences for their specific vulnerabilities, needs and interests. This invisibility is further reinforced by the tendency for MSE studies to adopt thematic, adult or outcomes orientated approaches which are ill-equipped to capture the implications of event processes for children (TCRN, 2015).

In the absence of a more comprehensive body of knowledge concerning children's rights and interests as a specific dimension of MSEs some distance may be travelled by cross-referencing what is known about how children are impacted by social developments generally with what is known about the social impacts of MSEs. This approach inevitably raises the possibility that a greater number of potential links are identifiable than than can be tested through the evidence available. However, such an approach remains valuable as a means of facilitating an inclusive consideration of the implications for children of event processes. In keeping with this inclusive approach it is important to remember that children can be impacted at three distinct, but interrelated and overlapping levels; the individual (direct), the family (indirect) and the broader community and physical environment (indirect) (UNICEF, *et al*, 2012). This means that children's rights and interests cannot be managed in isolation from their social networks and geographical environments and, because MSEs are delivered in community spaces, hosting processes inevitably present a range of direct and indirect risks and opportunities for them (see table 1.1.) For example, children may benefit from MSEs indirectly through opportunities presented to promote inclusive community environments while directly the right to development could be undermined by community relocation plans that fail to consider access to education. Inevitably the nature of the impact will be determined by the management of the associated processes and this together with the contextual sensitivity of MSEs dictates that the effective management of risks and opportunities for children requires a proactive and strategic approach that is informed by relevant social risk profiles and the *meaningful* engagement of affected stakeholders, which includes children.

Table 1.1: MSEs and Children's Rights and Interests HERE

Methodological Approach

The key parameters of the research study were to explore the intersection between children's rights and interests and the established social justice concerns regarding labour, LGBT, women, environment, housing, security and corruption. To accommodate the timeframe available (circa 16 weeks) the study was organised as a rapid evidence review which is a pragmatic and policy focussed version of a full systematic review designed to provide evidence-based insight into focussed topic areas in a short period of time. A panel of subject experts guided the search and interview strategy which included strict inclusion criteria, the targeting of a focussed range of electronic databases and key sources (including academic literature, policy documentation and key stakeholders), and a clear deadline for document retrieval.

In response to the low profile of children's rights within event-focussed research and in order to establish how these rights are affected by hosting processes across the MSE lifetime the review was conducted in two stages. The first stage focussed on the retrieval of empirical data (quantitative and qualitative) that explored the impact of hosting processes on rights broadly. The purpose of this stage was to: identify which interests and rights of children are or could be affected by MSEs and the point at which impact is catalysed; facilitate the identification of previously unexplored issues and opportunities and; highlight potential

cross-cutting themes. The electronic search strategy targeted relevant databases (for example, SportsDiscus), and was supplemented by direct searches of authors, specific journals (for example, the International Journal of Children's Rights), websites of international organisations concerned with human and/or children's rights, and other outlets identified by the electronic search, contacts with relevant advocacy organisations and the stakeholders interviewed. The search was restricted to English language documents and used the United Nations definition of a child being anyone under the age of 18. Due to the time constraints governing the project, documents or sources that could not be retrieved within one month of identification were omitted. The second stage of the project explored the data retrieved thematically as it related to each social justice theme identified for the study² and was designed to enable the presentation of detailed empirical information concerning the ways in which children's rights connect with MSE processes and flexibly accommodate 'living rights' as appropriate (Hanson and Nieuwenhuys, 2013).

Stakeholder interviews were conducted throughout both stages and were designed to inform search strategies; review, develop and challenge findings; and provide important 'insider' perspectives on the realities of the issues explored and proposed responses. A total of eleven interviews were held with a range of events and children-focused experts and human rights, events and children's organisation representatives. The interviews were semi-structured in order to provide interviewees with the space to present their understanding and link issue, action and rationale. This rich detailed data, together with the documentary analysis, enabled the identification of multi-causal processes and any (mis)alignment between policy rhetoric and reality in the areas under review as is explored in the following sections (Burnham et al, 2008).

Housing, MSEs and Children's Rights and Interests

The home lies at the heart of the family and community environments that shape childhood experiences. It is also the basis from which children access the services and development opportunities that underpin their emotional and physical health and wellbeing. It is therefore unsurprising that an adequate standard of living which includes housing and the protection of the family and a community way of life are rights specifically protected by the UNCRC (Articles 27 and 16 respectively). MSEs, because they are hosted in community environments, invariably intersect with these rights and may generate both positive and negative outcomes. For example, the affordable housing facilitated by the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games and community displacement witnessed in Brazil (Green, 2015; Waldron, 2014). However, the information available suggests that this intersection unfolds most frequently as a series of adverse challenges which may prevent children from accessing appropriate accommodation within safe environments and supportive community networks. A key message from this research is that the housing dimension of hosting projects should be considered a core area of risk and opportunity for children.

² In this analysis the theme of Corruption was not pursued individually due to insufficient evidence, instead it was approached as a cross-cutting theme that influenced impacts across all issue areas.

Community displacement is reflected in reports and evaluations of event preparation processes as a routine consequence of hosting which takes place in predominantly two ways. The first is the obvious physical relocation of residents and community groups away from areas earmarked for event-associated infrastructure. The second is the less visible outcome of the ‘gentrification’ caused by the development of an area for event-related purposes. Through this latter process indigenous communities are vulnerable to structural displacement as a result of associated rises in the cost of living and changes in local networks and service provision. Research suggests that both forms of displacement are characteristic of MSE hosting projects and frequently happen on a significant scale. For example, a study by the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) estimated that 720, 000 people were forcibly evicted from their homes for the 1988 Seoul Olympics, while 30, 000 poor families were displaced through gentrification processes associated with the 1996 Atlanta Games (COHRE, 2007: 11, 113). The issue remains current as reflected in reports on the 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games hosted in Brazil which suggests the displacement of 250, 000 people (Marinho *et al*, 2014: 37-40). Yet while it is inevitable that children will be among those displaced it is impossible to determine what proportion of the figures they make up because they are not separately identified. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to determine the scale of the impact on them or to develop a sophisticated understanding of how their experiences may differ from that of adults. What is known is that children have a heightened sensitivity to the consequences of poor environments and displacement which means that until the issue is addressed within hosting processes, claims regarding the promotion and protection of human rights and interests can be dismissed as largely aspirational (Bartlett, 1999).

Forced displacement affects families and communities in a myriad of ways, including the loss of property, social networks and access essential services and employment (COHRE, 2007). A rare insight into children’s experience of this is provided by TCRN’s (2014) research in Brazil which draw attention to the fear created by police operations and identifies event-associated violence as an area requiring far greater scrutiny. Although rare in event-related research, these findings are supported by work carried out with children who have experienced forced evictions in contexts unrelated to MSEs. For example, studies reviewed by Bartlett (1999) identify the potential for long-term trauma, position pre-verbal and children under ten at most risk and suggest that those as young as four may remember the violence involved. As a result of the trauma experienced children may suffer anxiety and recurring nightmares leading to apathy and withdrawal and it is not insignificant that parallels are drawn with the consequences of fear caused by armed conflict. Given the risks identified there is a clear and pressing need for those involved in hosting processes to pay far more attention to ensuring a child’s right to be protected from all forms of violence, particularly when events are awarded to countries where violence is an established social problem.

Displacement that occurs through gentrification has a lower profile in MSEs evaluations , potentially because it is less visible and because urban regeneration is generally presented as an event-associated opportunity (Pentifallo and Van Wynsberghe, 2015). Yet, while the

potential for urban regeneration presents a range of opportunities, they are not universal and for young and marginalised community members the associated developments can be experienced as exclusionary, de-valuing and a barrier to accessing an adequate standard of living (Watt, 2013). For example, Kennelly and Watt's (2011) study of the impact of the Vancouver 2010 and London 2012 Olympic Games on homeless and poorly housed children and young adults highlights how the prioritisation of event-associated developments over the improvement of dilapidated supported housing accommodation was interpreted as a manifestation of society's disregard for their well-being with the associated implications for personal perceptions of value and inclusion. Moving forward on the basis of an informed understanding of the social housing impacts of MSEs is, however, extremely challenging as calculations concerning the housing opportunities presented infrequently account for the losses created (Gustafson, 2015; Pentifallo and Van Wynsberghe, 2015). Determining how these impacts flow down to children is even more challenging because, as with displacement, the information provided does not generally separate them out as a distinct stakeholder group. Again, this issue is not unique to MSEs but reflects the way in which "children's needs are routinely ignored or misunderstood by urban development policy, plans and practices" (Bartlett 1999:63). Redressing the problem is also complicated by the challenges involved in collating relevant information, particularly in contexts where the prevalence of poor housing, forceful removal and social crime limits the isolation of event-specific impacts (Marinho *et al*, 2014).

Information concerning children's experience of the legacies of event-led housing-related impacts is equally if not more limited than that related to the preparation and delivery phases, but what little is available suggests that both positive and negative outcomes are possible. For example, early indications from the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games suggest that the event bolstered existing regeneration activities by facilitating affordable housing and encouraging greater diversity (Green, 2015). While, elsewhere, displacement legacies associated with the 2010 Football World Cup in South Africa appear less favourable and include poor quality over-crowded housing and a lack of accessible registration services for babies born in relocation sites (Burocco, 2014). As previously established, the implications of these outcomes for children are significant given their heightened vulnerability to the consequences of poor living conditions and increased risk of maltreatment in environments characterised by poverty and inadequate housing (Bartlett, 1999, 2009). It is therefore imperative that a framework is established for monitoring these legacies as a routine aspect of event evaluations so that the long-term implications are addressed as a requirement of planning processes and communities are not left vulnerable when the spotlight on the event host has moved on.

Labour, MSEs and Children's Rights and Interests

The labour dimension of MSE hosting processes generates significant interest, in part because the employment creation potential promoted is both highly attractive and heavily debated (Hagn and Maennig, 2007). Another significant dimension of this interest relates to concerns regarding the violation of labour rights within event supply chains, particularly in

construction and manufacturing industries. These concerns are important as they raise the possibility of direct and indirect consequences for children that extend well beyond the most frequently identified risks associated with child labour (UNCRC Article 32). Indeed, it is arguable that the focus on child labour, particularly when presented as an unequivocal negative (reflecting universal approaches to the consideration of rights), stymies discussion of a child's living rights and the possibility that children might be better served if supported to work in dignity and participate in the regulation of their employment (Hanson and Vandaele, 2003). It is also possible that the focus on child labour detracts attention from the potentially more pervasive consequences of MSEs' labour related issues that impact a child's right to adequate standards of living and to be with or able to contact their parents (UNCRC Articles 9, 10 and 27). Although less obvious because these impacts flow indirectly from the violation of the rights of parents working in event supply chains, it is possible that they are equally, if not more disadvantageous than those associated with child labour and therefore ought to be included within labour-related analysis.

In recent years the issue of construction site workers in event-associated infrastructure projects has absorbed much international attention, particularly in relation to the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics and upcoming Qatari 2022 Football World Cup although neither are unique for this criticism (Meier, 2015; Watts, 2016).). The list of concerns raised is extensive and includes dangerous working and living conditions, non-payment of salaries, and the withholding of documents needed to return home (Amnesty International; 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2013). Independently, these abuses warrant attention. However, what is rarely captured in the associated discussions is the impact of these abuses on the families of those affected, many of whom have been 'left-behind' by the workers harmed. Some insight into this is provided by Amnesty International's (2013: 21-59) research with migrant workers in Qatar which highlights, for example, how the non-payment of salaries may prevent a left-behind family from buying basic necessities or paying rent, mortgages or school fees. Amnesty's research also suggests that affected families may struggle to meet debt repayments and face harassment by moneylenders when unable to do so. No information is provided on the specific implications for the children involved, but as Brackenridge *et al* (2013: 7) point out this is not unusual, children are arguably "collateral damage" that receives limited attention in event studies academic or otherwise despite the risks they face. However, as with forced displacement, some insight can be gained through reference to research conducted into the issue unrelated to events. For example, Castaneda and Buck's (2011: 105-6) research into the effects of remittance led migration on children left-behind found that families may "pay" for the economic benefit obtained with "psychological traumas." They also highlight how uncertainty about the duration of separation is particularly unhelpful as it places the family in a state of continued instability. If these findings are overlaid by the concerns raised about migrant workers in MSE construction projects regarding labour violations that preclude remittances or return home it would suggest that the risks identified would be enhanced for affected children. This is not to suggest that MSE hosting processes should seek to prevent migrant working, but clearly more could be done to support the families left-behind. For example, UNICEF *et al* (2012) highlight how an industry and civil society group partnership in China supports distance parenting by enabling regular contact through the provision of

telephone cards, education and guidance services. There is no obvious reason why such projects could not be used as models for MSE-led support programmes in areas dependent on migrant labour.

Additional insight into the impact that children face indirectly as “collateral damage” is present in reports concerning poor working conditions in industry supply chains, which suggest that risks for children extend beyond their direct employment and are not in any way unique to MSEs (ILO & UNICEF, 2013). For example, research carried out with children of textile factory workers³ highlights how a range of survival, protection and development rights were undermined due to the poor working conditions and low pay of their parents (Swedwatch, 2014). The consequences of this for the children involved included the premature assumption of parental responsibilities, reduced access to education, malnutrition and an increased risk of injury and death due to a lack of adult supervision. It also appears that these issues will disproportionately affect girls who are placed in care-giving roles by gender norms (ILO & UNICEF, 2013).

The issues presented above present a very damning picture for the labour dimension of MSEs. However, alongside the risks presented, there are also opportunities to improve outcomes for children, directly and indirectly as a result of hosting driven improvements in event supply chains. Examples of this include, the way that Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have exploited media interest in Qatar’s hosting of the FIFA World Cup to draw global attention to the impacts of the long-established Kafala system⁴ on workers in the Middle East. Likewise, media interest in MSEs have provided opportunities to improve the management of labour practices within supply chains as demonstrated by the London 2012 Organising Committee’s (LOCOG) adoption of the Ethical Trading Initiative Base (ETIB) Code of Conduct⁵ as a contractual obligation for suppliers of licensed Olympic goods (Labour Behind the Label, 2012). Accordingly, when viewed alongside Swedwatch’s (2013) study into the indirect impacts on children of poor labour practices in manufacturing supply chains it becomes apparent that there is real potential to turn MSE-associated risks into opportunities. However, until event owners require adherence to specific labour standards as conditions of hosting, the adoption and implementation of protective frameworks like the ETIB will be piecemeal and constrained by incomplete knowledge of what works in what contexts and how.

Developing a More Responsible Approach to Hosting Opportunities

³ Not stated as related to MSEs, however as the textile industry is a key supplier for MSEs it is reasonable to accept the children’s feedback as illustrative of the issues that would be experienced elsewhere, which offers an insight that is currently unavailable in MSE research.

⁴ The Kafala system is a sponsorship system used by Gulf Cooperation Council countries to manage their migrant workforces. Under this system foreign workers need to be sponsored by a local citizen or local company in order for their work visas and residency to be valid and they are unable to change jobs, resign or enter or leave the country without the permission of their employer. For more information see Priyanka Motaparthy’s explanation on <http://www.migrant-rights.org/2015/03/understanding-kafala-an-archaic-law-at-cross-purposes-with-modern-development/> (accessed 27/07/2015)

⁵ See <http://www.ethicaltrade.org/eti-base-code> for full details of the Code

Despite gaps in knowledge concerning the specific consequences for children of MSE hosting processes it is clear that they present a range of risks *and* opportunities. It is also clear that the development of effective and responsive planning approaches will be stymied until the scale, nature and consequences are understood more comprehensively (Brackenridge *et al*, 2013). The first step to redressing this weakness is reversing the “invisibility” of children in event processes, which currently manifests as the failure to monitor whether they are considered, how they are perceived and how they are impacted. To be clear, this will not be easy because developing data collection approaches that capture demographic profiles and have the capacity to attribute MSE effects will be necessarily complicated by the characteristics of the area under study. For example, gathering data on homeless and street involved children will be complicated by the transient nature of these populations, while understanding legacy impacts will be inhibited by the predictable loss of political attention and public interest in the post-event period. However, despite these challenges, those involved in MSE planning and delivery need to recognise that the specific needs, interests and vulnerabilities of children should not be presumed as the same as wider society and understanding the material nuances will only be possible if children are given opportunities to inform and influence relevant decision-making processes. This is not to say that this participation is not happening. There are clearly lots of child-focussed initiatives linked to MSEs, but these tend to be fragmented, dependent on local drivers and the knowledge generated is rarely captured to inform future events.⁶ It is therefore unsurprising that MSE delivery processes lack the kind of co-ordinated approach required to ensure that risks and opportunities, including those individual to a particular host, are appropriately understood, identified, prioritised and acted upon.

The development of an efficient and effective child-aware approach to MSE hosting opportunities is dependent on a ‘golden thread’ that starts with clear leadership by event owners. This leadership will involve establishing children’s rights and interests as integral to the hosting criteria and operationalising them through a supportive monitoring, evaluation and, where necessary, sanction and access to remedy framework. This kind of approach could build on the use of the social impact assessments required to support MSE bids through the inclusion of a child-orientated dimension capable of ensuring that contextually relevant specific needs and vulnerabilities are not overlooked or assumed to be the same as the broader community. The advantages of this kind of approach is that if adopted as part of initial planning processes such assessments would provide a mechanism for identifying risks and opportunities at the point where the information generated could be used to inform the development of responsive strategies and embedded into delivery frameworks. The absence of such assessments would also offer grounds to challenge claims made about the risks and opportunities for host communities.

⁶ These characteristics also preclude the ability to determine with confidence how far the initiatives have been designed and determined by adults rather than through a process that actively engages children in the planning process.

There have been many encouraging developments recently that point to the possibility of the leadership sought on the part of event owners, for example, the IOC's Agenda 2020⁷ and FIFA's recognition of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.⁸ Yet, it is equally clear from the discussions around these activities as well as MSE-related research that event deliverers will need to be supported if they are to move away from established practice which does not recognise children as a particular stakeholder groups with specific needs and interests. For this reason, it seems likely that a general rights-based approach will also be vulnerable to overlooking children unless it features a specific child focus that is informed by a credible reference point like the UNCRC. Developing such an approach is entirely possible as the novel partnership between the Commonwealth Games Federation and UNICEF for the Glasgow 2014 Games demonstrates. Part of this work involved utilising the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Business Principles to map the impact of the event on the rights and interests of children as established in the Convention. Recognising the developmental nature of this work, those involved were conscious that the Business Principles are not a perfect fit for events, which as temporary entities do not follow the commercial business model that they were designed for. However, the Principles were able to facilitate an assessment within the context of a commercial operation and indicate what promoting and protecting children's rights looks like in the context of event delivery policy, planning and practice.

Ultimately, whatever approach is adopted, safeguarding children's rights and interests requires committed leadership from the event owner that is supported by an effective oversight mechanism without which engagement will be subject to the individual will of the host. The approach will also need to be facilitated by a programme of support so that initiatives like child-friendly social impact assessments are fit for purpose. To reach this level of efficacy these assessments will need to account for existing local risk profiles and include meaningful consultation with affected stakeholders so that event planning reflects actual rather than assumed situations. The advantage to this approach is that data would be collected with the level of detail and similarity required to inform analysis and if undertaken as a shared activity across MSE owners the potential to extend operational knowledge while benefiting from economies of scale appear significant. As a final point, efforts to achieve a more human rights and child orientated approach to event delivery must also take account of the legacies created by MSEs which are not always positive or planned so that affected stakeholders are not abandoned to manage consequences invariably not of their own creation.

⁷ See <http://www.olympic.org/olympic-agenda-2020> for more information

⁸ See <http://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/news/y=2015/m=7/news=fifa-executive-committee-sets-presidential-election-for-26-february-20-2666448.html> for more information (accessed 28/08/2015)

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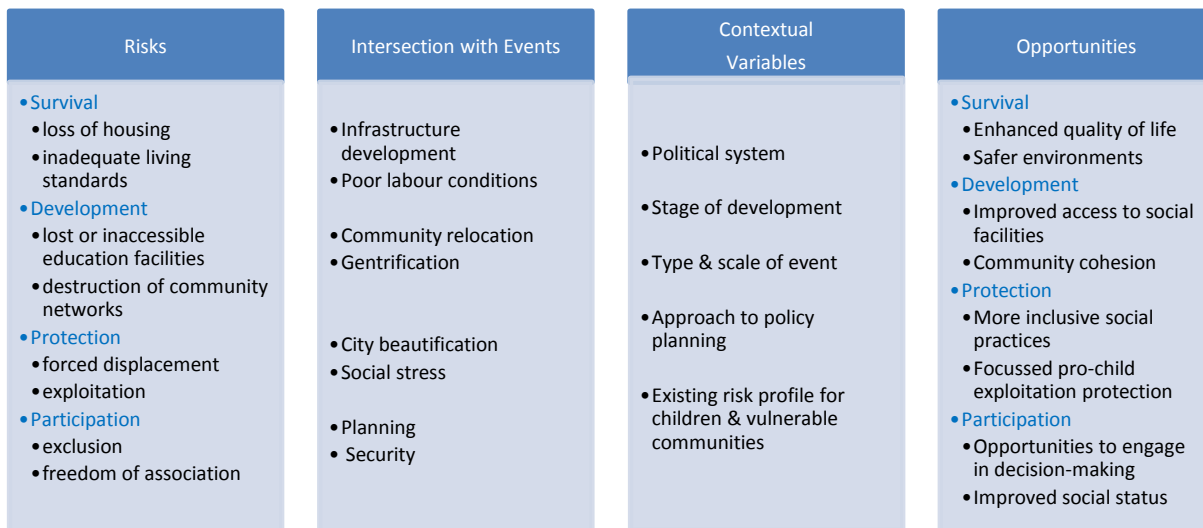
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Terre des Hommes International Federation - www.terredeshommes.org / Children Win Campaign - www.childrenwin.org

Table 1.1.



(Model adapted from Adams and Piekarcz, 2015: 7)