



ECA EVALUATION DIVISION

Study of ECA's SportsUnited Programs

Key Findings

December 2013

Through sports diplomacy exchange programs in over 100 countries, the U.S. Department of State promotes cross-cultural learning and linkages between foreign participants and Americans, increasing dialogue and cultural understanding worldwide.

The **SportsUnited Evaluation** covers three of the U.S. Department of State's sports diplomacy programs: Sports Visitor, Sports Grants and Sports Envoy. The study, covering the years 2002 to 2009,¹ investigated program outcomes including mutual understanding and cross-cultural learning; changes in attitudes toward the United States; acquisition of knowledge of the United States; development of sports skills; work in home communities; knowledge sharing; and building relationships after the exchange.

The evaluation design comprises both **qualitative and quantitative** approaches for data collection and analysis to assess the outcomes of SportsUnited programs.

The evaluation team reviewed program documents from ECA's SportsUnited Division and implementing partner organizations, and conducted interviews with them in order to gather information about each program's history, goals and objectives.

SportsUnited Evaluation Principal Data Sources

- Program documents
- Interviews with program officers and implementing partner organizations
- In-depth interviews with participants and key informants in South Africa and China in late 2010/early 2011
- Online surveys administered in 2011

Interviews took place in South Africa (November–December 2010) with 30 participants in Pretoria, Cape Town and Johannesburg: 5 from the Sports Visitor Program; 21 from the Sports Grants Program; and 2 Sports Envoy coaches and 2 Sports Envoy event organizers. The evaluation team also traveled to Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai in February 2011 to interview eight Chinese participants of the Sports Visitor Program and other individuals who either had been present at or were knowledgeable of Sports Envoy visits in the country.

Online surveys were developed for each of the three SportsUnited programs and administered from September to December 2011. Only foreign participants of the Sport Visitor and Sports Grants programs were surveyed. Only American participants of the Sports Envoy Program were surveyed, and they answered a different set of questions than Sports Visitor and Sports Grants respondents did.

Table 1: Survey Response Rates per Program

ECA SportsUnited Program	# Sent Survey	# of Respondents ²	% Responding
Sports Visitor	84	42	50%
Sports Grants	115	30	26%
Sports Envoy	25	11	42%

¹ The evaluation investigated outcomes from those who participated in the Sports Visitor Program from 2006 to 2009, the Sports Grants Program from 2002 to 2009, and the Sports Envoy Program from 2005 to 2009.

² The number of respondents includes participants who completed the survey and participants who partially completed the survey.



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PROGRAM FEATURES

Sports Visitor Program

Small groups of coaches, youth athletes and sports program administrators travel to the United States from around the world for a 2-week educational exchange program related to a particular sport. Participants are nominated by U.S. embassies overseas.

Sports Visitor programs include sessions on nutrition, strength and conditioning, gender equity in sports, sports and disability, and teambuilding, along with technical training. Special emphasis is placed on the visitors' development of personal action plans so that they can apply their experiences and newly learned skills once they return home.

Sports Grants Program

U.S. nonprofit organizations manage exchange programs for youth participants, coaches and sports administrators. Grants are both one-way and two-way exchanges with American participants traveling abroad and foreign participants coming to the United States.

Grant programs target underserved youth athletes 7–17 years old and/or coaches and administrators of youth sports.

Grants covered four thematic areas:

- Training sports coaches
- Youth sports management exchanges
- Youth with disabilities
- Sports and health



Colombian basketball Sports Visitors
meet with NBA players

Sports Envoy Program

Current and retired professional U.S. athletes or coaches volunteer as goodwill ambassadors for the United States. The program is conducted with the collaboration of U.S. national sports leagues and the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Envoys—athletes or coaches, normally one male and one female—travel to a single country for a 4- to 5-day program. Some Envoys travel to more than one country.

A typical Envoy visit includes clinics and workshops with youth, coaches and sports administrators. Visits include drills and teambuilding activities.

Athletes engage youth in dialogue on the importance of education, positive health practices and respect for diversity.

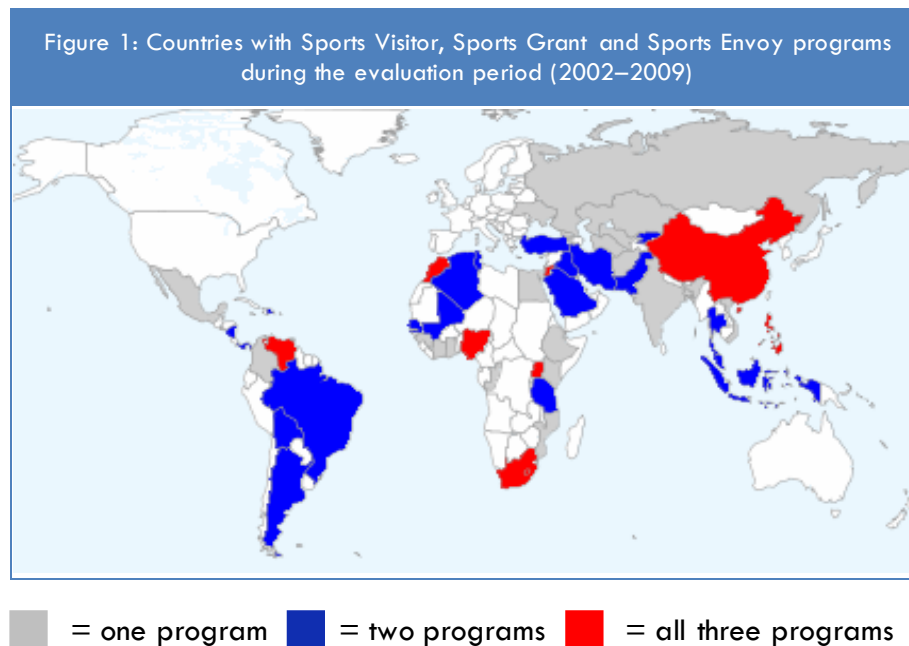
Envoys engage with leaders of the host country government, educators and the local business community.



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PROGRAM REACH

SportsUnited programs engage participants in countries all around the world, in every U.S. Department of State strategic region. During the evaluation period SportsUnited programs operated in 56 countries.



SportsUnited programs continue to expand—in terms of both countries and exchange participants.

During the period of the evaluation, 27 Sports Visitor programs were held, with a total of 376 participants from 28 countries spanning all major regions of the world. From 2010 to 2013, Sports Visitor programs were held in 92 countries, with a total of 911 foreign participants.

From 2005 to 2009, 85 Sports Envoys traveled from the United States to 34 countries. In comparison, from 2010 to 2013, 232 Sports Envoys traveled to 54 different countries.

The rate of participation for foreign participants in a Sports Grant program also has increased. During the 8 years covered by this evaluation, 985 individuals from 35 different countries participated. In the subsequent 4 years (2010–13), 845 individuals from 35 countries have participated in a Sports Grant program.



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ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE

SportsUnited participants report increased favorability toward and knowledge of the United States.

Almost all SportsUnited survey respondents³ (92%) reported that their views of Americans had improved after participating in the program. Eighty-seven percent of respondents reported that their views of the U.S. Government were "more favorable" or "much more favorable."⁴

The vast majority (90%) of respondents reported "moderate" or "extensive" knowledge of the United States overall after attending the program.

Similarly, 91 percent of respondents reported "moderate" or "extensive" knowledge of daily life in the United States after the program.

When asked to assess the effectiveness of the Sports Envoy Program, a majority of the 11 Envoys surveyed rated the program as "very effective" in terms of creating goodwill and improving attitudes and beliefs about the American people.

Figure 2: Change in Views of the U.S. Government and the American People

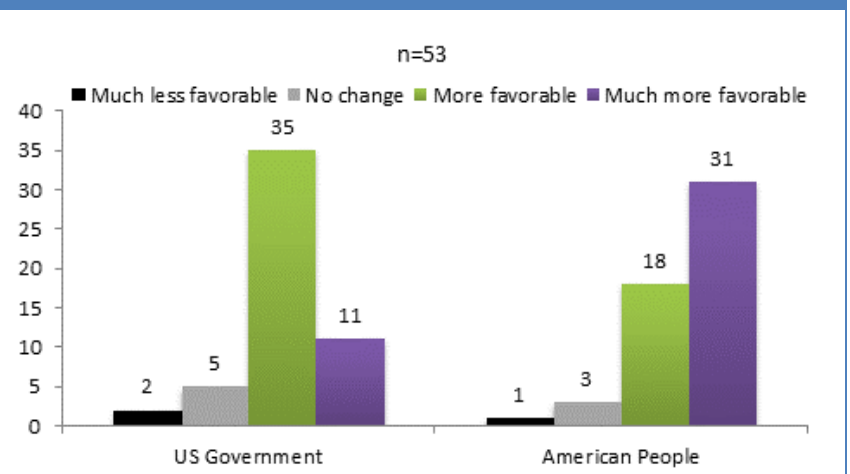
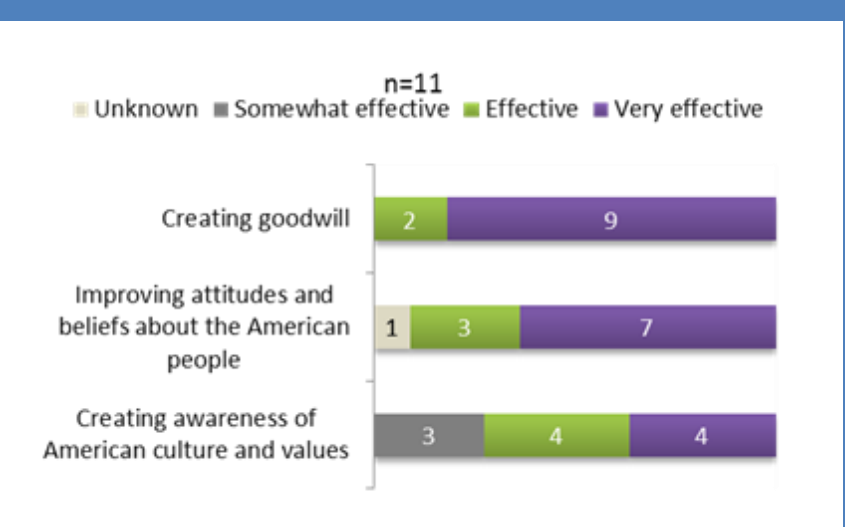


Figure 3: Sports Envoys Assess Program Effectiveness



³ References to "all survey respondents" reflect participants in the Sports Visitor and Sports Grants programs only, i.e., all foreign survey respondents, as opposed to the Sports Envoys, who are Americans, and who completed a different survey.

⁴ Although only four levels of favorability appear here, in the survey respondents were able to select their level of favorability on a five-point scale. No one selected "Less Favorable."



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Survey respondents report knowledge gains in terms of democratic values in the United States. After the program approximately 80 percent of respondents or more reported “moderate” or “extensive” knowledge of freedom of speech, ethnic diversity and religious diversity.

- Eighty-three percent of respondents reported “moderate” or “extensive” knowledge of ethnic diversity in the United States after the program.
- Seventy-nine percent reported “moderate” or “extensive” knowledge of religious diversity in the United States after the program.
- Eighty-one percent of respondents rated their knowledge of free speech and freedom of the press as “moderate” or “extensive” after the program.

[I learned] that the USA is a country of great diversity and success. Of course I knew this before visiting the USA, but I am even more aware of it now.

Sports Program Administrator, Sports for People with Disabilities, Czech Republic (2009), Sports Grants Program

Coaches provided examples of how they succeeded in bringing diverse groups together in countries known for sectarian and/or religious tensions, by reaching out and forming sports programs.

[I] have been involved in running/coaching basketball camps at community levels in different regions ... [This] created the opportunity to mix diverse groups, to introduce the concepts of accepting others

Coach, Basketball, Lebanon (2009), Sports Visitor Program

We gathered Lebanese athletes later here in Lebanon for many basketball camps and events ... Most importantly [we] united athletes from different religions and communities under the name of SportsUnited.

Coach, Basketball, Lebanon (2007), Sports Visitor Program

When asked about the topic of voluntary community service and philanthropy in the United States three-quarters (75%) indicated “moderate” or “extensive” knowledge in this area after participation in the program.



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SPORTS-RELATED SKILLS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

More than half of coaches and sports program administrators (54% or more) reported that their knowledge had improved "to a great extent" in these four areas:

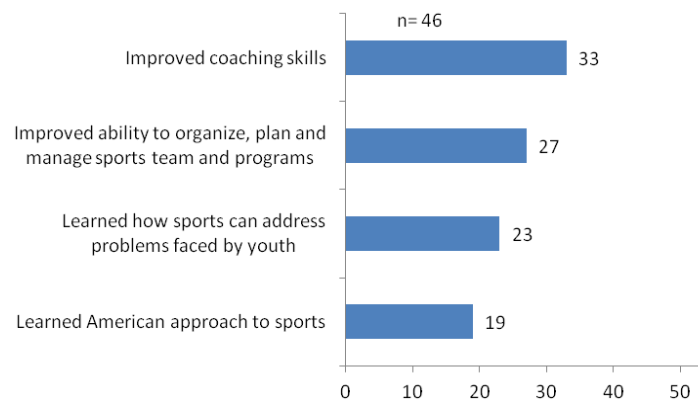
- Sports management and administration
- Coaching techniques and methods
- Leadership skills
- Teamwork and teambuilding

A majority of surveyed coaches and administrators identified "improved coaching skills" among their most important accomplishments resulting from SportsUnited participation (fig. 4⁵).



Cal Ripken gives baseball tips to young players in Japan

Figure 4: Most Cited Areas of Accomplishments:
Coaches and Administrators



The nine youth athletes⁶ who were surveyed indicated five areas in which their knowledge had improved:

- Teamwork and teambuilding
- Leadership skills
- Conflict resolution skills
- Strength and conditioning
- Playing and practicing techniques

In addition to improving playing and practicing techniques, four out of the nine youth athletes singled out the following areas among their top accomplishments:

- Sharing their culture with others
- Building relationships with players, coaches and administrators from the United States
- Learning about the American approach to sports
- Improving self-confidence

⁵ Note that N=46 represents the foreign coaches/administrators who responded to this question on the Sports Visitor or Sports Grants survey.

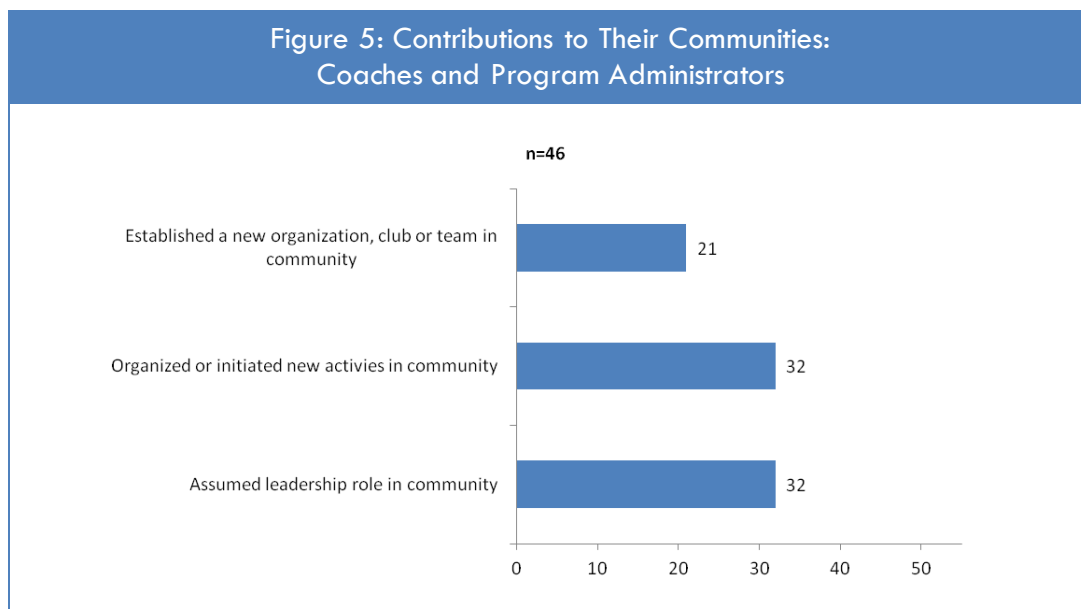
⁶ Youth athletes completed the same survey as coaches and administrators did. Their responses have been separated from the coaches and administrators here only.



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COMMUNITY WORK

Coaches and program administrators have used the skills they learned on their SportsUnited exchange to start new projects in their communities, to address social problems and to promote inclusion of underserved populations.



Sixty-nine percent of the coaches and program administrators surveyed indicated that they had organized or initiated new activities and projects, and/or had assumed a leadership role or position in their community. Close to half (46%) of surveyed coaches and administrators reported having established new organizations, clubs or teams in their community.

Coaches and administrators said that SportsUnited had led them to realize the power of sports as a gateway to gathering and educating youth.

[I gained an] awareness of how important sport is as a tool to assist in educating/organizing human beings, [e]specially the youth. [SportsUnited] has provided tools that gave me awareness [of] the power we have in our hands to help the community.

Sports Program Administrator, Baseball, Dominican Republic (2008), Sports Grants Program

[My most important achievement has been] to be able to go back to the communities I live in and share the knowledge I have about [the] HI[V] Virus through soccer... [N]ow I can talk to younger people about HIV without their raising their parents' ears, because I use soccer as a medium of expression.

Sports Program Administrator, Soccer, South Africa (2008), Sports Grants Program



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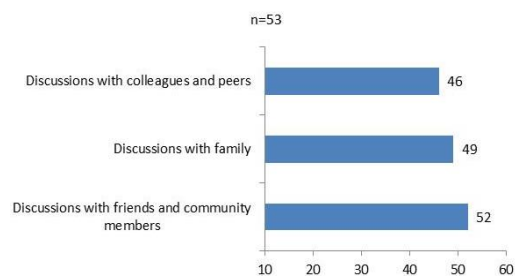
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KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Almost all those surveyed (87% or more) have shared their experience from the SportsUnited exchange with others back home (colleagues and peers, family, friends and community members).

Figure 6: Sharing Experiences or Knowledge Gained



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Roughly half (51%) of the foreign coaches and sports administrators surveyed reported having been in contact with coaches they had met in the United States after returning home.

Seven of the nine youth athletes reported that they had been in contact with American students and players they met on the SportsUnited program.

[My most important achievement was] building relationships with other coaches and sports administrators from the United States, including instructors from UCLA University [sic] and Cal Poly Pomona University.

Coach, Track and Field, Jordan (2009), Sports Grants Program

CONCLUSIONS

All three SportsUnited programs covered in this study have had a profound impact on participants. Foreign program participants who came to the United States with either a Sports Visitor or Sports Grant program reported that their exchange experience had **deepened their understanding of U.S. culture, people and values**, as well as provided them with **new skills and knowledge** that they were able to apply back home. At the same time, American Sports Envoys who traveled overseas **communicated key American values**, such as the importance of tolerance and inclusion, to the individuals and organizations who participated in their activities. In some cases, local organizations were inspired by the Envoy visits **to establish or to increase sports programs**.

Many of the respondents to the Sports Visitor and Sports Grants surveys—including foreign coaches, sports program administrators and youth athletes—were struck by the extent to which **U.S. society embodies inclusion and diversity** (race, religion, gender and physical abilities), both in general and in the field of sports. Other key areas of learning for respondents (youth athletes, coaches and administrators) included **leadership skills** and **teambuilding skills**.

Coaches and administrators learned how sports can be effective in addressing problems faced by youth. As such, many coaches and administrators applied these key areas of learning after returning home, either by initiating sports programs that **engage underserved groups** (e.g., girls or people with disabilities) or by bringing together youth from different ethnic communities.

Across all three programs, respondents have maintained contact with people they met on the program, thus **establishing cross-cultural relationships**.

The Evaluation Division enhances the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' leadership in the effective management of international exchanges by commissioning independent evaluations of ECA's programs.

Study of ECA's SportsUnited Programs was prepared by Evaluation Division staff Melinda Pitts, Michelle Hale and Jacob Laden. Data was collected by research firm Management Systems International.

Visit <http://eca.state.gov/evaluations-eca> to download the full report.