This chapter continues our examination of SfD at community level, now focusing on the young people who engage with SfD programmes. Its purpose is to develop fuller knowledge and understanding of how SfD activities feature in these young people’s lives. It is perhaps worth reiterating that this ‘investigative’ approach has a different emphasis from evaluation studies, where the primary focus is upon analyses of SfD ‘impacts’ (e.g. Burnett, 2009, 2014; Coalter, 2010c; Woodcock et al., 2012). This chapter is not attempting to offer an evaluation of whether ‘programmes’ achieve ‘outcomes’: instead, it has the more straightforward purpose of obtaining the perspectives of young people on their experiences of SfD. In this respect, the chapter is situated within a ‘research’ rather than an ‘evaluation’ paradigm.

By focusing in this way on young people’s accounts of SfD, the chapter is addressing a recognized gap. To date, first-hand indigenous accounts have not made a significant contribution to understanding in SfD (Darnell, 2007; Hayhurst, 2009; Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011; Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011), and young people’s voices have been especially under-represented. As Darnell and Hayhurst suggest:

> Despite the focus on young people in much SDP programming, their involvement as leaders and their knowledge and agency, continues [sic] to be subjugated amidst dominant development narratives and policy. (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011: 190)

The point is reinforced by Nicholls et al. (2011: 250), who note that the knowledge held by young people, and especially young women, ‘is rarely considered as part of the evidence base of sport for development and is often dismissed’. As Guest proposes (2009: 1348), it would therefore ‘be useful to know more about the diversity of actual experience of individuals and communities as related to development through sport programmes’ before researchers critically interrogate their impact. This chapter is intended to offer such a contribution to the
SfD literature by presenting localized accounts that make further use of the detailed qualitative data we have obtained from young people about their views and experiences.

The data used in this chapter has been collected across several years through numerous interviews, focus groups and informal discussions with participants and peer leaders, including recurrent interviews with some participants over several years. This work has spanned several different studies and has involved some young people involved with particular programmes, such as IDEALS and II, and associated with specific organizations, primarily EduSport and Sport in Action. We have also collected data with young people outside of the context of specific programmes, such as the interviews we undertook with young female footballers. Although most of these young women had involvement with SfD organizations, it was their participation in football teams that led to them being involved in this particular study.

While sport contexts have provided access to speak to young people, it has been important to us that our discussions have spanned issues beyond engagement in, and responses to, particular SfD programmes or organizations. In fact, even in discussing participation in sport, it has been apparent that some young people’s involvement spanned different organizations, programmes and activities, including but not confined to those we have worked with. The content of our data is not, therefore, confined to SfD, but also provides wide-ranging information on the context within which SfD operates. Our commentary is also informed by what we have learnt from many exchanges with adults in young people’s communities, including parents, head teachers and teachers, and those staffing sport and other youth development programmes, who have provided us with additional insights into the challenges facing local youth and the role of SfD activities in their lives.

As will become obvious in the sections that follow, when young people talk about their experience of SfD activities, they do frequently describe the beneficial effect their participation has had on them. This is especially the case for peer leaders, who typically have more intense engagement and higher levels of time commitment than participants. Similar distinctions have also been identified by Mwaanga (2003). Thus, although we do not ‘evaluate impact’ here, our investigative approach does provide several pointers to ways in which sport may have beneficial effects for participants, beyond the immediate experience of taking part. It also identifies some constraining factors which may limit such benefits. Findings regarding both benefits and constraints reinforce the value of obtaining such accounts directly from young people.
The chapter is structured into three main sections. In the first of these sections, we consider the values that young people attach to individually and collectively participating in sporting activities, from grassroots to, for some, elite level. These opportunities for participation have primarily been enabled by SfD organizations that seek to enhance sport provision in order to achieve wider development outcomes. In the second section, we examine the contribution of SfD activities towards two outcomes that are prominent within SfD generally and are particularly relevant to Zambian contexts, namely HIV/AIDS education and gender empowerment. Finally, we turn to the experiences of young people who have been able to access other opportunities, for education, training and support, through their involvement with SfD NGOs.

Experiences of sport in everyday life

As we have seen in Chapter 5, SfD organizations have had a substantial impact on sport provision in Zambia. Within Lusaka in particular, opportunities for participation have increased considerably in a number of communities (Banda, 2011). Through the work of SfD organizations and peer leaders, numerous new opportunities to take part in sport have emerged, allowing young people to undertake new activities and to connect with others within and outside their immediate communities. This section explores how young people have been affected by their involvement in these activities. As debates in the literature about the ‘impacts’ of SfD tend to focus on potential ‘social change’ outcomes (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011), relatively little is known about the role that simply taking part in sport may play in young people’s everyday lives. Here we use young people’s own accounts to explore what value young Zambians place on their involvement in sport.

The first theme evident in young people’s views on the experience of taking part in organized sport activities relates to the direct benefits arising from simply having the opportunity to participate. The SfD NGOs with which we have worked since our first visits to Zambia in 2006 operate in impoverished communities that commonly have limited services, amenities and resources. The combined influences of Zambia’s political–economic context and processes of urbanization, as explored in Chapters 2 and 4 respectively, have had often severe and adverse consequences for the recreational facilities and organized activities available to young people in these communities. Resources for sport are limited and, more generally, safe spaces for young people to come together are restricted.
It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that an overarching finding has been that the activities provided by SfD NGOs are greatly valued by those who participate in them. Sport sessions offered or developed by local SfD NGOs and other organizations have been significant additions to the very limited opportunities and facilities otherwise available to local youth. For the young people who were participants, many of whom were not attending school, taking part in organized sport activities provided a degree of purpose and structure that was not readily available in their lives. This quickly became a valued part of day-to-day life and, for many participants, became very important indeed.

When asked generally about their experiences of sport, all of the young people responded extremely positively. It was evident that there was a great deal of enjoyment of sport as an activity. This can be overlooked in analyses of SfD which mainly focus on the outcomes of such participation; what came through strongly in the research was how much young people valued the opportunity to take part and be involved in sport in its own right:

And for the love of it. I love sport. (Male participant, Chibolya)

At the same time, Sport in Action has imparted the coaching skills in me, which has been the love of my life because I love sport. (Male peer leader, Kabulonga)

There were indications that frequent participation was especially appreciated. Our interviews with young people who participated in the IDEALS programme, supported by volunteers from UK universities, emphasized how young Zambians especially valued being able to take part in regular activities. Whilst participants’ engagement varied, often because of some of the social factors identified in Chapter 4, some described taking part in the sport and/or educational activities at least twice a week and spoke of how much they looked forward to this. For some, it clearly became an important element in their lives; one young male participant in Chibolya explained ‘when we finish I cannot wait until Tuesday when I come again. … I go home and I wait for that’. During our work with Go Sisters, we were able to explore this issue by asking the peer leaders to outline how their involvement with the programme and with SfD activities fitted into their patterns of day-to-day life, including their time spent at home, in education and training, in paid work, and in other voluntary activities. This data reinforced the general finding that benefits of involvement appeared most pronounced among peer leaders – that is, the ‘participants’ whose engagement with various SfD activities was most intense and substantial. For the young women involved as peer leaders, the structure that Go Sisters
activities provided was particularly important: they valued the focus it gave them and the sense of purpose fostered by having something to do. One young woman described it as ‘organizing the sport and going to the ground, it gives me something to get up for. I am needed there’.

Many of the young people we spoke to described how their parents or guardians were supportive of their sports participation and encouraged them to take part despite having limited interest in sport themselves. This contrasts with some of the representations of families given in the previous chapter, and suggests that participants in SfD may be those who benefit from parental approval and support, and may indeed require it. Several of the girls and young women discussed how their mothers in particular felt it was important for them to take part in sport and felt that it was a positive thing for their daughters to do. For some young people, however, sport activities were an opportunity to escape from their home environment and some of the difficulties they experienced there. This female participant in Chawama explained how participating in football provided her with what Brady (2005) and Spaaij and Schulenkorf (2014) describe as a psychological or sociocultural ‘safe space’, somewhere to get away from broader problems:

It is very hard, my life at home is difficult and I can get very upset … it helps to know that I will see my team mates, and once I am playing I forget everything. All I want to do is make a good pass or score a goal … it helps me forget.

Some young people suggested that participating in sport not only provided a focus in itself, but also diverted them away from less productive activities. This aligns with the perspectives of local adults reported in Chapter 4, who warned that young people often fell into ‘immoral behaviours’ because they simply lacked other activities to occupy their time. The notion of sport as a diversionary tool is, however, complex (Giulianotti, 2004; Mwaanga, 2010), and this was reflected in the contrasting views offered by the many different young people we spoke to. In our long-term project with Go Sisters, for example, peer leaders were increasingly willing to share their reservations with us about the limits of this ‘diversionary’ effect. Notwithstanding this, across different studies, young people have repeatedly spoken of their belief that sport had helped them individually to avoid harm, as the following participant describes:

Football has changed my life: it has kept me away from the streets, it has given me something to do and something I’m good at. It has meant I am not on the streets smoking and drinking, and others fall pregnant, but most of the time I
spend my time at the ground so I don’t have the chance to get on the streets and start smoking and things like that. (Female participant, Chilenje)

Peer leaders also believed that, for some young people, sport activities did provide an alternative to being ‘stuck in the compound’ with limited structure or focus in their lives (Hansen, 2005). One young woman suggested:

Most of the girls, before, they were just lazing around and not doing anything and having children and getting married – there was nothing for them to do in the community. And now, they are at least doing some sports and becoming players; they are not just hanging around waiting for boys. They just go to sport. It has given them a purpose. (Female peer leader, Chawama)

The divergent perspectives of peer leaders ensure that we are cautious in avoiding over-claiming the benefits derived as a result of participation in organized sport activities. The variation in the accounts of what young people gain from participating in SfD activities is reflective of different experiences and levels of engagement in these activities. These accounts do emphasize, however, how much the provision of sport in itself can offer an enhancement to opportunities for young people.

The second theme within young people’s accounts of their participation in sport concerned the social connectedness they gained from their participation. Sport did also provide benefits beyond the direct experience of participating, yet still relating to the context of sport itself. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, providing and nurturing social support for young people have been important concerns of the SfD NGOs with which we have worked, and young people found benefit in becoming part of this ‘SfD family’. Interviewees indicated that social support can take many forms. Similar to Coalter’s (2010a) finding about the MYSA in Kenya, peer leaders in Lusaka developed strong friendships and extensive social support networks through their involvement in SfD activities:

The friendships and being part of a team is very important. If it wasn’t for sport I wouldn’t have met so many girls, who I now consider are my extended family, and that has been very important. We share our differences and learn from one another. (Female peer leader, Chawama)

Similarly, participants described activity sessions as opportunities to come together with existing and new friends to enjoy themselves. For a number of the
young people, particularly those from the more deprived areas, the sports sessions offered them time away from environments where they felt less secure:

So the way I play a game, I am very happy. My friends, we are laughing together, so I am very happy being with my friends. I have never seen any fear in their eyes [here]. It's good to me what we are doing here, very good to me. (Female participant, Lusaka)

The activity sessions therefore offered an environment in which young people could develop trusting friendships that provided them with a key support structure. Participants talked about developing friendships with peer leaders and other participants with whom they could share problems and issues, and generally turn to during difficult periods in their lives. Their descriptions of these relationships clearly contrast with those discussed in Chapter 4, where several commented on the risks of becoming bonded into ‘bad’ friendships which fostered unproductive or negative behaviours. Echoing Coalter (2010a), young people also demonstrated how such networks could provide compensation for a lack of social structure elsewhere. Young people with no parents or limited family support placed especially high value on these networks:

I don't have parents any more, and the people at the ground are now my family. They now look after me and it is them I turn to when I need help. (Female peer leader, Chawama)

As with the community-orientated SfD approaches discussed in the previous chapter, participants also referred to trusted peer leaders as being like older brothers and sisters, who would ‘watch out for them’ and be there when they needed help. Many young people who spoke about how they valued their relationships with older youths and adults went beyond descriptions of the personal support they received, and talked in terms that had resonance with the role modelling desired by SfD NGOs:

[EduSport staff member] is my role model – I trust her very much. I would like to be like her: she is very good and is very kind. And she has a good job but she is still helping people. I would like to be like her. (Female peer leader, Chawama)

As Meier (2015) has pointed out, the use of ‘role models’ is widespread in the field of ‘Sport and Development’, but has received little specific or critical attention. Sports role models are, however, diverse, and range from high-profile
professional athletes, who endorse campaigns for human rights, education, health care and so on, to local coaches and leaders. Meier has suggested that while celebrities are expected to exert influence through their high public profile and status, they have little if any direct contact with young people; in contrast, local sports role models may be actively involved in young people’s lives and exert influence through their proximity, relevance and accessibility (Meier and Saavedra, 2009; Meier, 2015).

Meier’s observations on the importance of local, accessible role models resonate with the strong testimonies we obtained from three different female Go Sisters peer leaders from Kalingalinga:

The Go Sisters in the office are very good people. They understand all of us and what it is like living here.

I want to be like [peer leader] – she is also a very good peer leader and she works really hard; she is always organizing activities and running things and motivating us. She is so good, and she had the chance to go to Livingstone with the Go Sisters. I would like to do that, to have that chance to travel and see other places with Go Sisters. I think it is a very good thing.

I want to be like [peer leader] – like the way he does things, the way he gets kids to listen to him and the way he inspires people. I want to be like that. Everyone in Kalingalinga knows [peer leader] and they think so much of him. I want to be looked up to like that. He is such a good peer leader. People really listen to him and the parents also.

It is notable that these young people describe their desire to emulate the personal qualities of peer leaders and staff, they do not solely covet the status and experiences they have gained within sporting contexts. The personal qualities that they admire in these role models confirm the communitarian ethos described in Chapter 5: young people spoke warmly of the support peer leaders gave to others, and the contributions they made to their communities. As identified in the previous chapter, the behaviour of role models beyond the sporting context may also be influential, and this adds a layer of complexity when considering the broader social outcomes that SfD may want to achieve.

The final theme concerning the benefits of sport participation per se relates to a more select group of sport participants – talented young Zambians who had progressed to high levels of sport performance. (Professional) sport is often posited as a means of moving ‘out of the ghetto’ (Gough, 2008), and as we have seen in Chapter 4, some young Zambians we spoke to did hope to find a way to escape or transform their current circumstances. Many young people
highlighted the significance to them of the coaching aspect of SfD activities; it gave them the opportunity to develop and improve their sport skills and challenge themselves through sport. Beyond this, several SfD participants we spoke to hoped that sport would be their ‘route out’ of their lives within the compounds:

I want to do sport because I want to be a professional footballer: I want to travel round the world and get lots of money. Through sport I can move away from where I am now. (Male participant, Chawama)

The research undertaken with women who played for Zambia’s senior and junior national football teams enabled exploration of the experiences of those for whom this had become something of a reality. As might be expected, the benefits of participating had been especially strong for these talented women. For many, it had been the increase in opportunities to play sport that had allowed them to identify that they were skilful and talented players. Several said they had initially started playing football within their local communities though SfD activities focused on female empowerment. Through this participation they had been chosen to play in a team selected and organized by an SfD NGO that was entered into the main women’s football league in Lusaka. This had in turn led to further talent identification, which for some then led to opportunities to play for Zambia at junior national level. For many, SfD activities provided by NGOs had therefore provided a catalyst for them to progress in their sport.

Being a member of an elite-level team provided many participants with completely new experiences. At an individual level this led to several gaining cultural capital though the capacity of sport to link them to external resources that would not have normally been accessible. For the young female elite footballers, selection to national teams provided the opportunity to attend training camps with others from across Zambia and travel to different countries to play competitive fixtures. The young women talked about how much they enjoyed experiencing different cultures and foods; one discussed seeing ‘an ocean’ as a particular highlight when travelling from landlocked Zambia to coastal South Africa. They were very aware that without sport they would have been unlikely to travel beyond their local area, as this young woman explained:

Sport really has changed my life; I could never have seen those things or tasted those foods. I would never have gone to Angola or South Africa or places like
this. I would never have been outside of Chawama if it was not for sport. (Female participant, Chawama)

For a select group of young people with exceptional talent in sport, involvement with SfD therefore led to the access of resources and experiences that would simply not have been available otherwise.

The findings presented thus far in the chapter relating to young people’s experiences of SfD activities suggest that participation takes different forms and can bring a variety of benefits. These include the enjoyment of sport itself, and the role that regular, organized activities can play in providing elements of purpose, structure and focus in young people’s day-to-day lives. The activities also offer a range of opportunities for developing social connections and support. For some, participation can clearly become very important, resonating with Willis’s findings in his analysis of MYSA. Willis in fact describes involvement with MYSA activities as becoming the ‘social epicentre of their lives’ for young people in Mathare (Willis, 2000: 844). Similarly, it was the case that numerous young Zambians attributed great importance to their engagement with local SfD NGOs.

Sport did not have the same personal importance to all participants that we spoke to, and this further emphasizes the diverse ways that young people respond to and benefit from SfD activities. Not all young people choose, or are able, to take part, and those who do vary in the intensity of their involvement and the meaning they attach to it. Contextualizing sport within broader dimensions of young peoples’ lives helps to understand some of these varied responses to activities provided by SfD NGOs. Chapter 4 identified some of the contextual issues, such as the broader family responsibilities that young people are required to meet, which may limit involvement in sport. On the other hand, the lack of other recreational or productive opportunities within compound communities may encourage some young people to be involved with sport rather than constrain them. Understanding the ongoing experiences and perspectives of young people is important in order to consider how their involvement in sport may contribute to broader personal and social development.

**Beyond the experience of participation: development through sport**

While continuing to focus on young people’s direct engagement with SfD activities, in this section our attention moves beyond the immediate experience of
participation. Like the wider SfD movement, the NGOs we worked with in Zambia sought to effect social change through sport in multiple ways. This section focuses on how young people experienced two key aspects of this work – the use of sport to deliver HIV/AIDS education and its use for young people's empowerment. These two aspects are strongly interlinked both in SfD practice and in respect of young people's lives, as demonstrated by the discussion in Chapter 4 of the influences on sexual behaviours of young women in particular. Therefore, the distinction between the two, that is useful in terms of the structure of this section, is inevitably an artificial one.

As has been discussed earlier in the book, the HIV/AIDS pandemic was and remains a key driver for the SfD movement as well as the SfD NGOs that we have worked with across a number of studies. Interviews with staff and peer leaders from these organizations enabled exploration in the previous chapter of their approach to offering educational content alongside and through sport to increase young people's knowledge of HIV/AIDS, together with opportunities to develop life skills to help them apply this knowledge to their own lives. This subsection turns to examining young people's experiences and views of both of these elements – the effectiveness of learning about HIV/AIDS through sport, and the issues surrounding translating knowledge into practice.

While it was recognized in Chapter 4 that young people were exposed to HIV/AIDS education in a variety of settings, most young people we spoke to felt their knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS had increased as a result of what they had learned during their participation in SfD activities. As this male peer leader from Chawama expressed:

I thank EduSport because they have taught me [sic] what is bad and what is good. So I know what is good. I know what is HIV. I know if I do this, I will go into HIV. If I do this, I will go into AIDS. So, I know what is bad and what is good.

When talking to participants, it was evident that many had high levels of knowledge and were articulate about HIV/AIDS. They were confident discussing what the virus was, how it was caught, and ways in which it could be prevented. The discursive methods by which HIV/AIDS information was provided through SfD activities were considered beneficial by young people:

I think it is different [to learning about HIV/AIDS at school] because here we do not just hear the information, we talk to each other about it … we do games that allow us to see what will happen to us. (Female participant, Chawama)
Their accounts also indicated that the friendships and trusting relationships that emerged through playing sport were important for establishing a setting where young people felt they could talk openly about sensitive issues and raise queries they had about the information they received. One participant explained how:

At school you would not ask the teacher if you did not understand, [but] at the ground they might say something about, ‘If you do this you will get HIV,’ and I will say, ‘I was told this,’ and we discuss it and it is explained to me. (Male participant, Kabwata)

Young people’s sense of confidence and security in this environment led some, as suggested within the peer leader literature (Price and Knibbs, 2009), to attribute higher status to the information they were given in SfD contexts than to that provided by teachers. One young person held the view that ‘teachers might lie to you because they do not want you to know certain things.’ In contrast, and in line with rationales for peer education discussed in the previous chapter, young people we spoke to felt that their peers would provide honest and accurate information. That peers often discussed information that would not be readily available in other educational settings also added to their credibility. One female peer leader explained that:

In school and at some church groups, they would not necessarily tell the youth that they could use a condom to prevent HIV … we tell the youth this. We say that abstinence is the only safe way but if you have to have sex you must use a condom. (Female peer leader, Kalingalinga)

Many young people, therefore, saw information provided by peers as giving a truthful account, which emphasizes the importance of this information being accurate. As Chapter 5 has illustrated in relation to Sport in Action and Edu-Sport, peer-led education is based on a relatively informal, unregulated network, and while this approach is well aligned with features of local Zambian contexts, it is difficult for staff from these NGOs to track what type of education is being communicated in all communities. There were some instances where we spoke to young people who believed, for example, that HIV/AIDS could be caught from touching, which suggests that the detailed information being communicated is not necessarily accurate. This highlights a fundamental risk in these and other informal education systems. The effectiveness of this method of delivering HIV/AIDS education in SfD relies on peer leaders and participants having accurate information to pass on to each other.
The young people’s responses nonetheless suggest that, for some, the educational elements of SfD activities were valuable for developing knowledge and awareness. As we have reported in Chapter 4, these activities were not the only source of information for young people. In common with other studies that have explored HIV/AIDS knowledge (Campbell, 2004), young people we spoke to recognized that they receive an abundance of information from school and community groups. Even young people not in school spoke of how HIV/AIDS was discussed continually within other community programmes and via church groups. However, the data gained from young people suggest that involvement in SfD activities at least provides further reinforcement regarding the prevalence of and ongoing problems created by the virus in their communities. Further, SfD activities may offer a particularly valuable site for discussing and interrogating this knowledge in ways which may not be available in other educational contexts.

The previous chapter identified that local SfD approaches and provision went beyond imparting factual information. As well as providing information, the importance of equipping young people with ‘life skills’ that could help protect them from situations and pressures that could expose them to HIV was emphasized by the SfD NGOs that we worked with, and was evident within the activities they delivered. Many of the young people we spoke with felt they now had a number of strategies to help resist peer pressure and were also more confident to insist that they were not pressured into activities that they did not want to do. As this young female participant from Chawama explained:

We talked a lot about pressure to have sex and it helped me realize that I did not have to have sex … I can say no and it does not make me bad.

Young people talked about the conversations that they had with each other as being important for helping them recognize when they were being coerced and acknowledge that this was unacceptable, as well as providing a space to discuss ways of navigating such pressure. In line with what has been found in studies examining gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS risk (James et al., 2004; Hallman, 2005), young men in particular often felt compelled to have sex to affirm their masculine identity. This male participant explained:

I was having a problem with my friends: they all said they had sex and I was not a man because I had not had sex. They said I should be with a girl that I am friends with and there was something wrong with me. I brought this problem to the ground and my team mates; they say, ‘No, you can just ignore them. It is
not right for you to be having sex at this time.’ They helped me do what is right.
(Male participant, Kabulonga)

These positive findings cannot be accepted uncritically and should not be universalized. The issues raised by peer leaders in Chapter 5 regarding the challenges that they faced in encouraging young people to engage with education and alter problem behaviours are useful counterpoints here. Similar to Campbell’s (2004) examination of generic HIV/AIDS community education programs, young people who felt their engagement with SfD had enabled them to exert greater control over their lives appeared to be those who had supportive family and home environments. While the idea of standing up for their rights and ignoring pressure to participate in risky behaviour was a persuasive one, and can be a reality for some young people, the breadth of our data has made it clear that it is not always possible for all young people to act in this way.

It will also be evident in the above discussion that, in their efforts to equip young people to assert their rights, Zambian SfD NGOs enacted HIV/AIDS education in a way that invokes notions of empowerment. This widely used concept is one that we have examined in most detail through our studies that focus on young women. We now explore the core concept of empowerment in more detail and examine how young people felt their engagement with SfD NGOs and activities had supported, or otherwise, their own empowerment.

The young people with whom we have worked have experienced a wide range of development ‘work’ through their involvement in SfD activities. The work of Zambian SfD NGOs aims to encourage education, promote gender equity and impart overarching life skills. Together, these elements have the broad intention of fostering young people’s ‘empowerment’, to equip them to be active agents in improving their own, and perhaps others’, lives. Empowerment is, however, a complex, multilayered process and, as in other development sectors (Rowlands, 1995; Mosedale, 2005), is a commonly used but infrequently defined concept in SfD. The term is most often employed with regard to gender-orientated ‘female empowerment’, and our own most substantial and detailed accounts come from research with young women. These include female peer leaders and participants in both mixed-sex and predominantly female SfD activities, including some specifically orientated to female empowerment, as well as our female football interviewees. In line with our broader, localizing methodology, our discussions with these young women have considered their own understandings of what ‘empowerment’ might mean and ‘look like’, as well as how involvement with SfD may contribute to their becoming ‘empowered’.
As might be expected given the broader lack of consensus about ‘empowerment’ (Luttrell and Quiroz, 2009; Hennink et al., 2012), the concept of empowerment was open to numerous interpretations and was discussed in many different ways amongst young Zambian women. Peer leaders were well versed in messages about sport raising self-esteem and self-confidence and developing life skills, but had some difficulty explaining what this would mean in practice and how it might contribute more widely to the reality of girls’ and women’s lives in their community. The varied interpretations that the peer leaders had of empowerment included:

Empowerment is really like helping someone to do something on their own. Today you help them do something – like, you tell them, ‘This is what I want you to do.’ The next time they start doing it on their own. So I would say, from one step to another and doing it all by yourself and not getting help from anyone. You can get suggestions, opinions, but do that on your own, which means you are empowered. (Female peer leader, Kalingalinga)

I am able to stand in front of people. That is my main challenge. ‘Cause I used to feel shy, you know, standing in front of people and all that. So my main challenge was, and interacting, I am able to interact with anyone and so that is my main empowerment. (Female peer leader, Kalingalinga)

Like, for me, how I understand about the word empowerment, I get more happy when I see young girls are being empowered. I don't have to see some girls just languishing … I just want them to be involved in activities so that, two, three years’ time, they should also co-ordinate, coach in Go Sisters programmes. (Female peer leader, Chawama)

During the interviews, peer leaders mainly spoke in terms of individual empowerment. Some spoke of empowerment simply in terms of getting girls and young women involved in sport and retaining them as participants. For most, however, empowerment was about having understanding and skills, aspects of personal development that many authors consider valuable but not necessarily sufficient for empowerment (Kabeer, 1999; Hennink et al. 2012). In an isolated contribution, one interviewee discussed the broader idea that empowerment involved translating the sense of ‘being/feeling’ empowered into action:

Yes, empowerment is having good knowledge and applying the knowledge to the best of your ability. So I think that is the whole complete process of empowerment … because I think if you are empowered quite ok, alright, [but] you may not do anything about it, I don't think you can call that empowerment. It is just half of it and it is not complete. (Female peer leader, Kalingalinga)
In general, issues of collective action and representation, which are necessary for structural change to occur, rarely featured in the young women’s interpretations of empowerment per se. However, this seemingly limited view of empowerment has to sit alongside peer leaders’ broader discussions of societal and community barriers to gender equity, as explored in the preceding chapters. As such, several peer leaders reported mixed reactions to their work, including resistance from some parents. They described the difficulty of dealing with this at times, especially as the views of young people had less status than those of adults in the community.

Similar findings emerge from our work with female footballers, whose very participation in a ‘masculine’ sport challenges the restrictive gender norms that disempower girls and women. Within the context of the rigid patriarchal structures that exist in Zambia, having young women as leaders and organizers who were openly participating in the overtly masculine sport of football was a ‘new possibility’ (Rowlands, 1995) and a considerable challenge to the dominant community order. On the surface at least, these young women were redefining their roles and positions within communities. As one player explained:

In Kalingalinga they think, ‘Football, it is only for the men.’ But we have shown them that women can also play and we can do the same things as men. It is making Kalingalinga change how they see women here. (Female participant, Kalingalinga)

The young women’s comments supported the claims often articulated by practitioners and policymakers about the value of sport for challenging disempowering stereotypes and cultural values. The sense of individual empowerment was very strong for the young women we spoke to:

I think, before I came to the ground, I did think that men were stronger than women and we could not fight this. I know now that it is not right for a man to beat me; I have a right to say ‘No, you should not do this to me.’ (Female participant, Munali)

Here again, however, there was an apparent separation between individual and collective empowerment. As with the perspectives of peer leaders, however, these individualized senses of empowerment were not matched by wider social change. As much as young women discussed redefining notions of femininity and their status and position within communities, they also talked about
having to navigate negative attitudes and sometimes aggression towards their participation:

I have had men say to me I should be ashamed, I don’t behave like a woman should. They say I am trying to be like a man and it is wrong … they say these things as I walk down the street. (Female peer leader, Kabwata)

Although young women could offer some examples where they felt they were developing what Rowlands (1995) terms ‘power from within’ and generating new possibilities, it was apparent that they often had to navigate a delicate balance between continuing to conform to cultural norms and contesting them. A number of the young women we spoke to had to negotiate with their families to be able to participate in various SfD activities, and could only do so by offering a range of compromises:

My father, he did not want me to play, he said I should be at home and helping my mother with my sisters. … I told him that I would do my jobs in the morning before I went to the ground and once we had finished I would come straight home … in the end he let me play, but sometimes I can’t because my mother needs me to do work for her. (Female participant, Chilenje)

Other young women also spoke of tensions between the sense of personal agency generated within SfD contexts and the structural constraints on exercising this agency in their broader lives. Speaking of her own experience, one commented:

Yes, I play football and I feel strong and we are showing those in our community, then, we can do the things that men do … but they [men] do not include us in community matters, we still have no say in what happens. It is changing a little but very slowly. (Female participant, Chawama)

Speaking of other participants, another peer leader gave further detail of familial constraints and believed that broader support was required if young people were to become empowered:

Sometimes at the ground they change, but then, when they get home, someone despises them so they stop that change. Unless at home they are helped a bit, it will not happen. That message needs to happen all over, not just from me. (Female peer leader, Kabwata)

These comments highlight an issue that other studies have also identified – that while, individually, participants in SfD may experience increased
confidence and knowledge and also develop critical awareness of their situations, this falls short of eroding the cultural norms that present structural constraints (Kay, 2011). Our Zambian interviewees were conscious that their individual sense of empowerment was not matched by changes in broader cultural structures around them. Despite accessing some aspects of power, they were unable to disrupt significantly what Rowlands (1995) defines as ‘power over’, i.e. the repressive influences that negatively affect their lives. Yet their accounts also made reference to ways in which they engaged with and confronted these constraining structures – by being seen by men taking part in sport, by negotiating with parents – and to small changes, happening slowly. This suggests that instead of drawing a rigid distinction between ‘individual’ and ‘collective’ change, it may be productive to recognize the interaction between them.

This more complex picture also emerges in accounts of other contexts in which young people experienced strong individual development through sport, but were then powerless to challenge norms and values within their broader communities. Chapter 5 described the way in which, within SfD communities, young people felt respected and able to exert their rights, but peer leaders felt this did not necessarily translate to other contexts. One female peer leader explained that ‘people respect me very much in my community now … I organize things, I make things happen,’ but revealed that this influence did not extend beyond participants involved in SfD activities. As in Chapter 4, young people felt excluded from community affairs, and that their opinions were rarely sought by community stakeholders or those in positions of power within communities. This was also the experience of peer leaders who within an SfD community had generated some position of standing and authority amongst other young people, but continued to be ignored by adult stakeholders and leaders. One commented:

I organize a lot in my community and I meet with many youth – they respect me and I know them well. I have been doing this for nearly eight years, but not once does any councillor come and see me. No one in power has ever asked for my view on how to help the youth in my community. (Male peer leader, Kamwala)

The qualitative data that we have collected has been useful in revealing the complexity and contradictions surrounding the use of sport for empowerment. From a research perspective it was notable that a contemporaneous small-scale quantitative survey that we undertook obtained relatively positive
findings regarding issues connected to empowerment, whereas the greater probing possible within interviews revealed a more complex and sometimes problematic picture, including negative parental reactions. Whilst many young people have been able to experience aspects of empowerment, their capacity to achieve transformative change is clearly heavily circumscribed in the face of sociocultural forces within their communities. This is, however, in line with community development theory (Ledwith, 2011), which suggests that genuine transformation of repressive beliefs and values within communities is a slow process. On the one hand, the experiences of interviewees suggest that young people’s individual experiences of becoming ‘empowered’ are insufficient to generate structural changes in the immediate future. At the same time, these strong senses of individual empowerment that many experience are an important and necessary building block in this process. Perhaps most importantly, this ‘individual’ change does not occur in a social vacuum, but involves interactions with – and challenges to – those who resist it. This point is returned to and considered in more detail in the conclusion to the chapter.

The final substantial topic that has emerged through our work with young people has been the extent to which SfD programmes have offered access to non-sport education and training opportunities, and the importance this has had for those accessing such opportunities. Our data here comes from our work with those involved in the Go Sisters programme, from whom we have gathered data on support for educational opportunities as well as various forms of vocational training. These benefits are not necessarily unique to this programme, and the ‘beneficiaries’ are not homogeneous: among our Go Sisters interviewees are some young women who received education scholarships, and other young people who have held some form of leadership position in SfD activities. These leaders have developed skills through their experience of fulfilling their leadership roles, and through varying levels of training opportunities provided to support them. We start by considering the benefits obtained by participants through their access to formal education, then examine the outcomes of peer leader experiences and training at multiple levels.

Both generally throughout their activities and across particular programmes, the SfD NGOs that we worked with in Zambia have had, at a minimum, implicit educational objectives that extend broadly beyond the specific focus on HIV/AIDS. SfD NGOs have consistently encouraged young people to value education, and this ethos permeates specific ‘life skills’ activities as well as guidance
provided by supportive adults and peer leaders. More specifically, a number of SfD NGOs provide scholarships that enable young people to stay in school to complete the grade 12 certification which marks the successful completion of compulsory secondary education.

Go Sisters was one of the programmes which supported access to formal education through funded scholarships. These were central to the programme and one of the most highly valued components of the UK funding that supported the programme’s expansion from 2008 to 2013. Between these dates, Go Sisters provided 128 school scholarships for girls and young women whose opportunities to attend or complete secondary school would have otherwise been limited or constrained by the costs of school attendance and other factors of the kind discussed in Chapter 4.

The opportunity to obtain school education was highly valued by the recipients and by their parents:

They have done a lot: they have taken me to school, they have taught me many things. I can now do things. Before I was doing bad things, I didn’t look after myself and I had a son. I thought my life was finished and I would not finish school, but Go Sisters has helped me to go back to school and to make something of my life. I will be able to provide better for my son as well. It has changed me a lot – I wasn’t a good girl at all and I’m telling the truth. I know now I need to look after myself and be good, and I do not want to let the Go Sisters down when they are sending me to school. I want to finish my education to show them they were right to give me the sponsorship. (Female peer leader, Kalingalinga)

I have got a scholarship for my education from Go Sisters; my mother thinks that is a very good thing and she wants me to finish my education so I can go and get a good job. So she supports me to do Go Sisters because she knows I could not do my education if I wasn’t a Go Sister. (Female peer leader, Chawama)

Beyond the beneficiaries themselves, other stakeholders in the Go Sisters programme highlighted the life-changing potential that these education scholarships provided:

A lot of girls, their lives or their life story has changed in the sense that that they have a hope, they have been able to finish school. We had young girls who did not have a hope to finish school, who had no hope of ever going to school. But through their interaction in sport and getting a sponsorship under Go Sisters, we have been able to see a lot of girls from deprived families complete school and be able go to college and, some of them, work. (Head teacher, community school Chawama)
The language, and importance, of ‘hope’ recognized by this interviewee can be identified as having some broader significance. Enabling increased aspirations amongst young people is by no means a panacea for the challenges that they face, no matter how realistic those aspirations may be. However, the alternative, as Barnett recognizes, can also have important implications: ‘where hope and resources are absent, behaviour change messages are less likely to be effective’ (Barnett, 2008: 243).

Notwithstanding their value, the provision of these scholarships was not without challenges. Scholarships that enabled young women to return to school were not necessarily enough to compensate for gaps in their previous education. It could be difficult for young women to succeed academically if they were re-entering school having been out of the education system for some time, and there were cases of drop-out amongst those receiving scholarships because of these educational challenges. For some, therefore, the educational scholarships did not automatically lead to enhanced opportunities. Whilst scholarships allowed young people to stay in formal education, this did not mitigate broader social challenges that limited their educational prospects. For example, young people below grade 10 (the school year before young people begin final examinations) attend community schools in their compounds that are often staffed by untrained volunteer teachers. When scholarships enabled them to transfer to high schools outside of their communities to take their grade 12 examinations, they found that they did not always have the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to successfully thrive in that environment. A number of young people talked about failing grade 12 subjects and having to retake them the following year, sometimes when scholarships were not available for them to do so. Others were unable to access results owing to unpaid fees, as this participant discussed:

My goal is to go to college but, as at now, I can say that we are having financial problems … when I was at school, Go Sisters paid half of my tuitions at school, but the rest, my mum was like, ‘I don’t have the money right now.’ So we couldn’t finish that balance, so even my results, they are still at school. (Female peer leader, Chawama)

Scholarships alone, therefore, were not always able to facilitate educational attainment and enhance career prospects for young people. As indicated in Chapter 4, even where young people did successfully complete high-school education, job prospects remained limited. Nonetheless, the opportunity to
attend school was regarded as one of Go Sisters’ biggest contributions to young women’s futures and to the wider community:

I think the biggest achievement for the programme is the fact that they are able to provide the scholarships to girls … [so] they are able to finish their school and go to college … for me that is the greatest achievement. … So it’s really difficult to quantify that kind of achievement. But for me I think it’s the greatest achievement because they’re making a difference in the community, they are making a difference, girls are participating in sport and they are finishing their school, they are going to college, they are working, and those that are working are giving back to the same communities. (Representative, MSYCD)

As these comments show, scholarships were regarded as a means to equip young women for paid work. This was also a strong theme in comments made about the benefits gained from peer leadership roles. As the previous chapter showed, the roles of peer leaders were diverse and the formal and informal training they received varied considerably. From 2008 the Go Sisters programme, for example, offered a hierarchy of roles including peer leader, action-team leader and provincial co-ordinator, supported by a range of training activities. Go Sisters and other peer leaders have adopted other leadership roles beyond their involvement in SfD, including school prefects, Sunday school teachers, coaches, youth action group leaders and nurse assistants. Notwithstanding this variety, there has been great consistency among the Go Sisters peer leaders who were interviewed in reporting that they have acquired multiple skills through their leadership roles.

The ability to ‘stand up in front of people’ to deliver sport and/or educational content was especially emphasized by peer leaders who we interviewed. They repeatedly stated that developing these skills led to increased self-confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness. For different peer leaders, these characteristics may develop from slightly different starting points upon beginning as peer leaders, but the overall direction of travel was clear:

It has taught me so many things – I am now a leader, I can stand up in front of people and talk to them. I can lead discussions. I was too shy before, I would not have been confident to do these things, but now I can. (Female peer leader, Chawama)

I am more confident, I can make choices better and I have discovered I am able to lead others – I can stand in front of them and I can deliver information and teach them about sports. (Female peer leader, Kabwata)
Such benefits are recognized in other studies of peer leaders in African contexts (e.g. Molassiotis et al., 2004). SfD peer leaders also expressed their belief that their increased self-esteem and self-confidence would benefit them beyond the sport context:

I think it will help me in the future when I meet new people, I am confident and I know that I can teach and I can help other people. You know how to talk to people. (Female peer leader, Kalingalinga)

International donors had also provided some peer leaders with opportunities to travel internationally – to South Africa, the UK, Norway and Canada – so that they could be involved in various leadership development opportunities. As with the elite football players, peer leaders discussed the value of these experiences for cultural exchange, exposing them to alternative cultures and developing their leadership skills and knowledge. Through connections made during overseas visits, a small number of peer leaders were able to secure scholarships to undertake further education within donor countries, an opportunity they again recognized would not have arisen without their long-term involvement in SfD.

A small number of peer leaders involved with SfD NGOs have had opportunities to progress beyond peer leadership to more senior roles with greater responsibility. For those girls and young women associated with the Go Sisters programme, experience as interns, action-team leaders and provincial co-ordinators further developed their leadership abilities and an additional array of professional skills:

OK, yeah, I'm an assistant co-ordinator for the [province], yeah, there's a Go Sister co-ordinator and the general co-ordinator for all programmes in [the province]. For me, I assist both of them; it's a very big, huge responsibility, yes; they organize workshops, tournaments, monitor and evaluate where you see that here they didn't do well, and hold meetings. [I do] files, paperwork, yeah, I do write minutes, when there is a meeting, yeah. I do that. And I write reports as well, monitoring quarterly reports, to submit to the co-ordinator, the Copper-Belt co-ordinator Go Sister. Then she submits to [EduSport]. Yeah, I also do the typing. (Female provincial assistant co-ordinator)

Unpaid internships emerged as an important element of Go Sisters’ direct contribution to education and employment skills and aspirations. While the provision of internships could be identified and criticized as being aligned with a neo-liberal political economy, our concern here is to go beyond this to
interrogate the experiences of the young people who became such interns. The internships were small in number (12), but it became apparent that they delivered exceptional developmental opportunities for those who obtained them. They allowed young women to work as assistant co-ordinators for four months and, as internships are very rare in Zambia, provided very valuable experience, including skills in areas such as information technology, report writing and presenting that enhance their employability. The detailed qualitative reflections of young women who had been interns best illuminate different aspects of their internship experiences, including their initial aspirations, the challenges that they faced and the ways in which being involved as an intern contributed to developing their capacities. In the first of the two examples here, a long-standing Lusaka-based peer leader (in Box 2) explains how she had used the internship as an opportunity to build the skills she needed to support her plans for developing a programme of her own which would deliver football in schools.

Box 2: Aspirations for internship

Obviously, before I went to Livingstone, I had an aim of doing something, like I wanted to achieve something in a space of time of which I can see myself to have done part of that. Before I went to Livingstone and before this internship, I applied for this internship and that was part of the plan – applying for this internship, getting the experience, because there is a certain programme that I am doing on my own … [In] this small community-based organization, which is being run by me … we want to promote soccer, so we are taking soccer, like it’s going to be a simple form of soccer – we call it the ‘seven aside five aside’, I don’t know if you have ever heard of it – yes, that is what we want, to take and introduce to the school because there has never been anything like that in Zambia, and we want to do probably indoors or even outdoors but we are planning mainly in doing it indoors, which is going to be a good thing. So all that was part of my plan. The internship was going to help me to do that, to achieve this. I was going to learn a great deal of how I see things and how I perceive things and how I was going to go about achieving this, and I think I am on my way. I have got my experience. I know where to start. It is good.
In the second example (Box 3), another young woman explains the practical challenges she experienced and overcame when she moved from Lusaka to Livingstone for six months to be an intern with the Southern Province Go Sisters team. She highlights both the challenges of everyday living – including dealing with a different language and higher costs – and the opportunity to develop her professional skills by learning from the approaches of the local peer leaders.

**Box 3: Experiences of internship**

There is a great deal that has been happening [since the last research visit]. Obviously there is positive change that has happened with me. First of all I got the chance to work as an intern with EduSport Foundation, which was a very great six months. I had a lot of experience when I went to Livingstone 'cause I was working the whole Southern Province. So I had a chance to see how other peer leaders work and how they do their activities and [that was] unlike here in Lusaka. And my greatest aim of going there, to Livingstone, being an EduSport Intern, was to learn all those different criterias on how they have their leadership skills so that I could implement them myself, so that I can become a more stronger person than I was.

Well at the beginning it was challenging, being the first time to the Southern Province, I had never been there before, so it was my first time going there on internship. And the language that I was speaking there I didn't understand, so it was a big challenge. Even the kind of lifestyle that they have there and here in Lusaka is different … in terms of, you know, the food you buy – there the food is [more] expensive than here. And for me to get used to that was difficult, because for me I was used to buying things here a bit cheaper, you know. Like even distance, in terms of transport here, it's very long like the distance, and then in Livingstone it's a very short distance, here even transport is very cheap. So all those things, you know, they were a challenge to me. But as time went by I got used to it, I got to know people, I became friends with a lot of them. I became a role model to some of them, so that made me feel really proud of myself, yeah.

I have [developed skills] in terms of writing a report, yes. Even like, you know, chairing a meeting, yeah, in Livingstone, because like I was
During our time working with Go Sisters, a number of the young women we first knew as novice peer leaders have progressed to paid work and business, using skills and/or networks they have developed through their involvement in the programme and with SfD more generally. The peer leader whose perspective was highlighted in Box 2, who devised her own football coaching programme, talked about her peer leader experiences as being fundamental for providing her with both the skills and initiative to organize this programme. A further group of peer leaders and participants who had come together to make clothing and sell it at a local market did so using connections made through sport, highlighting the possibilities of SfD NGOs fostering skills and providing resources which could encourage some transformative action amongst young people:

We started the group and the group is still there; we started a business, specialized business. So, we're in city market right now and we're doing typing and printing. So for the knitting we are on hold for now because, like, most of the girls they're in school, so they're busy with school, so they're not able to do that. So we just go there to the shop once in a while to do the typing and printing. We were given more like a loan for us to start it. So, like, every month we have to pay back the money. But, like, when we finish paying the loan, that's when we start getting paid. Yeah, that's how it is. But now we're not getting paid or anything, we are just working to pay back the loan. (Female peer leader, Kalingalinga)

The development of entrepreneurial skills has become an element of the Go Sisters programme. Similar to the female participants in Hayhurst's (2013, 2014) study in Uganda, some young women, through the Go Sisters programme, were 'equipped to survive in the current global neoliberal climate using social entrepreneurial tactics' (2014: 297). Interviews with those young women who have
been able to build on such skills that they had developed felt that the autonomy and financial independence that was enabled made a major contribution to wider processes associated with empowerment:

I do a business. I sell clothes. ... After undergoing the entrepreneurial workshop, that's when I started doing that. I also sell earrings. ... They [EduSport] give them money, like more like a loan, they start doing that business and then they start paying back the money slowly ... Yeah, my plan is to come up with a boutique and a salon in the same shop ... Yes, it is very important [for girls to earn their own money], reason being that if we are depending on somewhere, I think that's where the violence comes from mostly, but if I am earning my own money I don't think violence would be there. I would say, let's say I am married or have a boyfriend, right. I always want to get money from my boyfriend so whatever he tells me to do I will always obey ... If I refuse, what happens is he beats me up. If I am independent, I earn my own money, when he tells me to do something I do not think I will easily do that. (Female peer leader, Kalingalinga)

I think we get exposed. Empowering girls, it doesn’t mean you find a job for them and then you tell them to start working there. It’s about being self-confident and able to do that work. You discover yourself, what you can do and what you can’t do. I am one of the people that have benefitted from that. I think, those days I couldn’t stand in public and speak, but now I can speak in public, I’m a public speaker. So for me that’s empowerment on its own. (Female peer leader, Kalingalinga)

Possibilities of upward social mobility in Zambia are very limited (see Chapter 4 for a broader discussion of this issue) and it was not a viable outcome for the majority of the young people we spoke to. Reflecting the difficult economic conditions and the high levels of unemployment in compound communities, many young people involved with SfD activities were unable to secure any regular paid employment. Most of the peer leaders that were involved in our Go Sisters tracking research and who were no longer in school did not acquire paid work. They often extended their volunteering commitments extensively, and this became a substitute for paid employment, but they continued to lack economic capital that, again, restricted their ability to make significant changes in their lives.

Whilst the peer leaders who had taken part in internship opportunities spoke positively about their experiences, one expressed disappointment that it did not provide a springboard for regular employment as she had hoped. She described returning to her community and ‘normal life’ after undertaking the internship as a challenging experience and, whilst she felt she had enhanced
her skills, this had not yet led to the tangible employment outcomes that she was hoping for.

I got used to, like, waking up in the morning, going to the office, looking into the files, like planning what to do during the day. But when I came here [returned to Lusaka] it was kind of like hard ’cause I got used to that life … but when I got back here you wait [for something to do]. (Female peer leader, Kalingalinga)

With a critical lens, therefore, we could suggest that involvement with SfD activities may foster a false hope amongst young people, creating individual ambitions that may be thwarted by structural barriers. As Hayhurst further suggests, specifically focusing on young women, even when participants were able to develop entrepreneurial skills this did not significantly alter the ‘broader structural inequalities and gender relations that marginalize girls in the first place’ (2014: 297). Whilst we encountered instances of sport promoting upward mobility in young people, this has to be placed critically alongside the more commonplace experiences of young people for whom involvement with SfD NGOs could do little to change their own overall life prospects. But while we join others in resisting exaggerated claims about the capacity of SfD to deliver structural change, we are also wary of dismissing its potential contributions. Young people’s accounts give multiple examples of how ‘individual’ change is nonetheless connected to wider social relations. Assessments of SfD must be realistic about what the early seeds of structural change ‘look like’, and how – and over how long – wider change might occur.

Conclusions

This chapter adds further dimensions to understanding of localized SfD by drawing on young people’s own accounts of their involvement with SfD NGOs and their various activities. These commentaries reveal complexity and diversity, even in simple descriptions of taking part in sport; for some young people, participation in SfD activities offered enjoyment but did not appear to have a wider significance to their lives, while for others it became much more central and meaningful. The chapter has, therefore, highlighted that young people’s responses to the same activities, in the same localities, may vary to greater extents and with more divergent consequences than standardized measures (for example of self-esteem and self-efficacy; Coalter, 2013) might indicate. This finding reinforces the importance and value of obtaining direct and qualitative accounts from participants.
Detailed qualitative data not only reveals the specific nature of individual responses to SfD, but also emphasizes what varied ‘contributions’ SfD activities and organizations may offer young people. The chapter has especially highlighted how much value many young people attributed to sport in its own right – ‘as sport’, an enjoyable activity that they could take part in together. The preoccupation with sport as a vehicle for social change can overlook the extent to which desirable elements of sport can be experienced through the activity itself – by taking part in organized activity, being physically active, having social contact, and using and developing sport skills.

In this respect, the findings of this research align with Guest’s (2009: 1347) suggestion that, rather than placing predetermined agendas and outcomes on SfD, practitioners, funders and researchers should view an effective programme as ‘one that simply provides the social space for communities to enact their own versions of healthy and positive development.’ This form of development appears to occur widely within ‘SfD communities’ in Lusaka. The community-within-a-community concept first raised in Chapter 5 provides an interesting context for interpreting the outcomes of SfD. Within the contexts of SfD activities and the organizations responsible for them, young people were able to gain access to opportunities to learn and to be valued, respected and listened to; opportunities that were not generally available within the wider communities in which these young people lived. However, this alternative way of being and knowing did not necessarily translate into young people’s wider lives. Whilst there is a research gap in terms of understanding whether and how sport can significantly disrupt and contest existing social conditions, maybe for a proportion of young people this is too ambitious an aspiration, and for them an outlet that provides friendship, hope, fun and enjoyment is all that they are seeking from sport. What was communicated most extensively by young people was how much they valued the social relationships that could be fostered through sport. Without talking directly to young people, the nuances and diversity of experience of SfD activities becomes lost.

Young interviewees’ accounts, therefore, stress the value of sport as an activity in its own right. In emphasizing this, we are not, however, arguing that sport has no capacity for ‘development’. Whilst critical, as others have been (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011; Spaaij, 2011), of the capacity of SfD to create wider structural change within communities, we believe our data does provide glimpses of the potential of sports programmes to have such a role. The data on the value of sport for delivering HIV/AIDS education and facilitating wider educational involvement suggested that, for some, sport could make a worthwhile contribution to
such development goals. Various ‘development’ benefits were especially marked for the minority who had been supported in internships connected to the Go Sisters programme. However, the cases of Go Sisters interns also illustrate the constraints of SfD: while young women gave unequivocal accounts of the very significant benefits they had obtained, these gains had not yet led to tangible outcomes in terms of subsequent employment. This offers something of a paradox: is such marked personal ‘development’ negated by the lack of outcome? We argue that personal development remains a valued and important goal of SfD interventions, and recognize that whilst currently this may not be translating into broader structural changes within the lives of young Zambians, it may provide the foundation to do so in the future. Although aspects of this chapter have illustrated the limitations of SfD for transforming the contexts of young people’s lives, as Chapter 5 has also illustrated, the benefits at an individual level and the empowerment young people experience from the opportunities available to them may play a role in catalysing broader social change over time.

Hartmann and Kwauk’s critique of SfD interventions suggests that change can only be achieved if sport is delivered in a way that places community-orientated activism at its core:

Recruiting participants onto court is only part of the deal; the other more crucial, challenging and humbling part is to provide an education program alongside and in the sport program that actively seeks to engage participants in a mutual process of grappling with power, inequity and identity. (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011: 297)

Through engaging diverse groups of young people in various research studies, many different experiences relating to ‘development’ can be identified. At one end of the spectrum we spoke to young people who attended SfD activities simply to take part in sport and were not exposed to the type of education Hartmann and Kwauk advocate. However, linking with the analysis in the previous chapter, several of the young people cited in this chapter illustrate that engagement in SfD can lead to greater critical awareness and determination to make change. There were some examples of collective action emerging from networks established in an SfD setting. In some instances, more time is required for such collectives to build across other SfD sites and to mobilize effectively to lead to changes in existing social and cultural dynamics. There is also a need for SfD programmes to continue to purposefully engage in a critical, action-orientated agenda that seeks to support young people to facilitate changes at a community level. Whilst many of the programmes that we conducted research
with were committed to critiquing existing conditions and looking to facilitate change, such a progressive agenda was not always evident in all.

While it is important not to overstate the value of sport or SfD (Saavedra, 2009), the perspectives of young people would suggest that some gains are better than none. The findings of this chapter also raise the question of whether, despite the obvious limits, sport may nonetheless contribute to wider social change. For example, the experiences of young women suggest repressive gender values continue to dominate in compound communities, but sport has at least offered young women some space to resist these perspectives and to develop and present an alternative view, even for a short period. We would also argue, therefore, that conceptualizing ‘individual’ and ‘structural’ or ‘collective’ social change as discrete categories may be unhelpful and underplay the value of individual change in laying the foundations for structural change.

In exploring these issues it has been valuable to be able to include in our research the young women footballers who were able to participate in elite-level sport. They provide a particularly complex and useful illustration of the limitations of upward mobility via sport. Whilst these women were able to reflect on their experiences fondly, elite participation has done little to change their daily lives. Unlike their male counterparts, they have not been able to gain any financial benefit from their involvement and have had to return to life in the compounds, where they are marginalized and unable to alter substantially the cultural hegemony that maintains their positions within poverty.

As researchers, therefore, we are not uncritical or unaware of the limitations of the SfD activities as discussed throughout the last two chapters and would not dispute some of the conclusions drawn by other scholars that interventions often maintain the status quo (Darnell and Hayhurst, 2011) or fail to ‘bring about notable social change’ (Hartmann and Kwauk, 2011: 291). Whilst involvement in SfD activities may raise some young people’s self-esteem, their leadership skills and their aspirations, this is of little use if the broader constraining factors within their families, communities and Zambian society prevent young people from using these qualities. However, the data gives some limited indication of Sugden’s (2014) ‘ripple effect’, whereby young people’s involvement in SfD provides the impetus for the emergence of alternative beliefs and values, or broader change amongst parents, community members and those in positions of power. Similar to Spaaij (2011), we consider engagement in SfD can provide young Zambians with access to social and cultural capital that can facilitate some degree of social mobility, although this cannot be assumed to also contribute to long-term structural change.
These conclusions reflect the complexity of the issues to which SfD is directed in Zambia and of the contexts within which SfD activities take place. While criticisms that SfD does not sufficiently contribute to transformative change have relevance in these Zambian contexts, this is not to say that those involved in Zambian SfD are not aware of these limitations and challenges. As the data that has been presented demonstrates, many young people can themselves fluently articulate about the shortcomings of SfD approaches. That they can also speak of, and identify, possibilities of broader social change through SfD is similarly important. While SfD cannot immediately transform entrenched power relations and social structures, it may offer a contribution to complementary processes that enable such possibilities. Continued research that recognizes young people’s voices is necessary to further develop understanding of whether and how this may occur.