



#UnMionPaUnMihóSDK:

Rethinking Public-Private Partnerships in Sport

In Curaçao, companies are very involved in supporting a wide array of causes, from carnival celebrations to sporting events. Nevertheless, in the sport industry several initiatives rely very heavily on government support through subsidies, funds, and special arrangements to survive. In 2015, the Government of Curaçao founded a new organization, the Federashon Desaroyo Deportivo Kòrsou (FDDK – Federation for Sports Development Curaçao), to assist in better managing funds related to sports development on the island.

TEXT NEELAM MELWANI

FDDK’s primary responsibility is to support, coordinate, and align sport development in Curaçao, guiding organizations that are focused on promoting sports and wellbeing. Curaçao Business Magazine spoke to Mr. Thakai Doran, the Director of FDDK regarding the importance of sport in community development and society, and his experiences with the private sector in promoting sports and healthy lifestyles in Curaçao. Recently, FDDK launched a new campaign, titled Un Mion Pa Un Mihó SDK to create support for the renovation of Curaçao’s sport center, Sentro Deportivo Kòrsou (SDK). Doran was born and raised in Curaçao, and has a background in hotel and sports manage-

ment. From a young age, he always wanted to be a physical education teacher, but realized very early on that he also had a knack for sports management, and pursued a career in that instead. Over the course of his career, he’s worked for various private sector companies, until becoming the new director of FDDK in 2012. According to Doran, “I am passionate about what I do – I believe that sports are an important part of our community.”

The Private Sector and Sport

According to Doran, the private sector in Curaçao has always been very active in investing in sports in Curaçao, however the approach

through which this is currently done is outdated and requires a renewed plan. Doran referred to a common example in Curaçao: companies often sponsor the printing of jerseys of sports uniforms every couple of years and as such often get their names printed on these as an indication of their support. According to Doran, “The way we think about supporting sports needs to change– we need to create new incentives to allow the private sector to invest in the long-term development of our youth and society.”

Doran explains how some companies in Curaçao are finding innovative ways to invest in sport development on the island:

United Telecommunication Services provides FDDK with free internet and phone plans, as well as office space, to assist the organization in functioning at a lower cost. Aqualetra assists in finding ways to reduce energy costs, providing technical assistance to FDDK.

PWC provides free accountancy support to FDDK again reducing overhead costs. The Bureau of Telecommunication and Post provides FDDK with technical assistance to reduce energy costs and transitioning to renewable energy.

The assistance provided by these companies does not necessarily result in a concrete project or program to directly assist in sport development in Curaçao, but indirectly, by decreasing the costs of the functioning of FDDK, the companies are able to ensure that the budget of FDDK is spent effectively in promoting physical education and sport development.

This kind of investment and partnership is not for all companies in Curaçao, and it is important that there is a healthy mix of both short-term project financing and long-term organization financing, the latter of which is lacking in so many areas. Doran provided examples like sponsoring individuals to get degrees to teach physical education in schools as another example where companies could lend a helping hand. “By creating incentives and equipping these teachers with the right skills, we will be able to invest in the youth through sport in a sustainable way, making sure that all children have access to sport education.”

Sports as a Tool

When asked about his motivation, Doran answered with a quote from Nelson Mandela: “Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand.” He mentions that this really holds true in Curaçao where youth unemployment is relatively high, obesity rates are one of the highest in the world, and school dropout rates are steadily increasing. Even in this situation, Curaçao remains the country with the highest number of Major League Baseball players per capita, a champion Little League team, a football team that is ranked 73rd in the world, and celebrated athletes in track and field.

For an island of its size, and considering the lack of adequate resources, the sport industry demonstrates its potential to make a lasting impact again and again. Doran explains that with the right investments, he hopes to allow Curaçao’s sports facilities and teams to reach their full potential, providing support to learning, amateur and pro-athletes in the coming years.

#UnMionPaUnMihóSDK

With this mindset, FDDK launched its new campaign titled ‘Un Mion Pa Un Mihó SDK.’ The idea of this campaign is to encourage a different kind of public-private partnership, where partners in Curaçao invest in renovating the island’s sports center – focusing on making it

talent development center to cater to various target groups, including the youth – teaching them movement and sport, local sporting teams and clubs, and international athletes who would want to spend part of their training season in Curaçao.

The idea of the campaign is for FDDK to reach its 1 million guilder goal before Curaçao hosts the largest sporting event in its history: The Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) Games scheduled for spring 2017. During the Games, FDDK anticipates that Curaçao will be receiving over 500 athletes and more than 500 spectators. In its current state, the stadium is not ready to handle this large capacity of athletes and individuals, and is in desperate need of renovation.

Together with the private sector and government, FDDK hopes to renovate the center for the Games and beyond, aiming to become the first completely energy neutral sporting facility in the Caribbean region, fully equipped with a development center and gym for pro-athletes, but also accessible to the rest of the community for all kinds of sport and movement activities.

Looking Forward

The #UnMionPaUnMihóSDK was launched in September, and while 1,000,000 is still very far away, Doran remains hopeful. He claims that as time passes, more and more companies are seeing the added value of sports and are changing

the way they look at investing in the industry. “Sports can lay the foundation for so many basic skills that young people need,” Doran said in closing, “It teaches them discipline – they know they won’t succeed if they don’t practice. It teaches them team work – they learn that they need to trust one another to win. It teaches them dedication – they learn that even if something doesn’t quite work the first time around, it might the second time. And most importantly, they learn to have fun – it teaches them that even when they work hard and compete, they can have a great time with one another.”

FDDK recently closed a new deal with some of Curaçao’s top athletics athletes and the Curaçao International Financial Services Association (CIFA). Through interacting with athletes like Churandy Martina, Liemarvin Bonevacia, Hensley Paulina, and Terrence Agard, CIFA understood the importance of the long-term investment in sport. These young male athletes are role models for so many in the local society, who might not have anyone else to turn to. They work together to promote Curaçao’s potential and reach out to citizens on island alike.

The added value of sport in Curaçao’s society is unparalleled, and it is time, as Doran says, that we look at this industry as one of Curaçao’s largest assets, and use this to equip the next generation with the skills to succeed, and build bridges between and among partners.

