

SECONDARY SCHOOLS' UNITED NATIONS SYMPOSIUM 2017

# Paralympic Committee

Chair:

Samaa Kazerouni

Vice Chairs:

Nicole Sharma

Nicole Beausoleil

Emilie Doyon



NOVEMBER 16-19, 2017 | MONTRÉAL, QUÉBEC



## Paralympic Committee

Dear Delegates,

My name is Samaa Kazerouni and I am in my final year at McGill University, studying International Development and Psychology. I was first introduced to Model UN when I was in grade eight, serving as a page at my high school's Model UN conference. Since then, I have experienced being a delegate, committee director, vice chair, chair as well as a secretariat member. Model UN has connected me with inspirational colleagues and mentors alike, taught me the ins and outs of diplomacy, and most importantly, fostered my passion for global affairs. On behalf of the dais for the Paralympic Committee, including three outstanding Vice Chairs, Émilie Doyon, Nicole Sharma, and Nicole Beausoleil, I am thrilled to welcome you all to SSUNS 2017! We cannot wait to meet you all in November, for what we know will be an unforgettable weekend.

Here is a brief introduction to our dais members! Nicole S. is a fourth-year student at McGill from Stamford, Connecticut. She is majoring in Economics and Geography (Urban Systems) and has a cat named Vladimir. Nicole is very excited for SSUNS 2017 and cannot wait to meet all the delegates! Nicole B. is from Mississauga, Ontario and is in her third year at McGill majoring in Psychology with a minor in History. Though this is her first year on the dais for SSUNS, this is not her first time participating in the conference. In high school she was a delegate in two different SSUNS conferences, and last year she served as a committee director. She is very excited to be back, for one of the best SSUNS yet! Last but not least, Émilie is currently studying Women's Studies and International Development in her third and final year at McGill University. She is from Montréal and loves this city with all her heart. Émilie has been involved with Model UN since high school, when she attended her first SSUNS conference in a crisis committee. Émilie is super excited to help chair the Paralympic Committee along a capable and hardworking dais!

We are very excited to present you with the following background guide to aid your research efforts into the riveting topics that we will be debating during this year's conference. It is imperative to remember that this guide serves as an overview into the topics that we have chosen. In order to make the most of your time at SSUNS, we encourage personal research into subtopics pertaining to your delegation that you might find especially interesting. We are sure that your research will impress us and contribute immensely to the committee's discussions.

If you have any questions between now and the conference, or if you just want to say hello, please do not hesitate to reach out to any one of us and we will make sure to get back to you as soon as possible! Whether you have questions about the committee, the specific topics or about McGill, we would be happy to speak with you and start getting to know you leading up to the conference!

Sincerely,

Your Paralympic Committee Dais, SSUNS 2017

Samaa Kazerouni (Chair)  
Nicole Beausoleil (Vice Chair)  
Nicole Sharma (Vice Chair)  
Emilie Doyon (Vice Chair)



# Topic 1: Cheating Prevention at the 2018 Paralympics: Anti-Doping and Determining the Eligibility of Athletes

## Background

The Paralympic Games has been one of the most notable international sporting events for years. Paralympic athletes train for years just to have the opportunity to participate in the prestigious event. Considering how much the Paralympic Games mean to its participants and the time and effort the majority of these athletes put into their sport, it has been essential to the Paralympic committee that the spirit of sportsmanship and ethical behaviour are fundamental principles of the games. However, throughout the years it has become well known that some athletes who participate in these games are willing to violate these principles to achieve a Paralympic medal. In previous instances, there have been cases of doping at the Paralympic Games,<sup>1</sup> as well situations in which its participants did not have either a physical, visual, or intellectual impairment that permits them to be eligible to participate in the games.<sup>2</sup> With the 2018 PyeongChang Paralympics approaching, it is essential that the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) considers possible strategies regarding the prevention of doping and cheating, as well as consider possible sanctions for athletes or states that do attempt to violate the principles of the Paralympics for personal gain.

In 2000, the Sydney Paralympics were the venue to one of the most controversial events in the games' history. Shortly after the conclusion of these games, ten athletes on the Spanish Paralympic basketball team were found not to have the intellectual impairment that gave them eligibility to participate in the event.<sup>3</sup> This scandal was revealed by a reporter, Carlos Ribagorda, who infiltrated the team two years before the games and became a player on the team. He revealed that his eligibility to participate as an athlete with an intellectual impairment had never been tested by either the Spanish Paralympic Committee or the team.<sup>4</sup> After an investigation by the IPC, it was found that his claim was valid, and only two of his nine other teammates on the Spanish team actually had the eligibility to participate based on the classification of an intellectual impairment outlined by the committee.<sup>5</sup> The members of the team were ordered to hand back their Sydney Games gold medals soon after.<sup>6</sup> With regards to

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<sup>1</sup> Davies, Gareth A. "Disabled Sport: Sydney cheats stripped of medals." The Telegraph. December 14, 2000. Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/2994623/Disabled-Sport-Sydney-cheats-stripped-of-medals.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Tremlett, Giles. "The Cheats." The Guardian. September 15, 2004. Accessed April 17, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2004/sep/16/gilestremlett.features11>



doping, the Paralympics have seen many individual instances of such. At the 2008 games in Beijing, for example, three powerlifters tested positive for steroids, and one wheelchair basketball player tested positive for a banned substance.<sup>7</sup> All four athletes were subsequently expelled.<sup>8</sup> Recently, the IPC decided unanimously to suspend the entire Russian team from the Paralympics in Rio 2016 following a doping investigation.<sup>9</sup> The study concluded following the issuing of WADA's<sup>10</sup> Independent Person Report which discovered 35 positive samples in sport related to the Paralympics from 2012 to 2015.<sup>11</sup> This evidence led the IPC to believe a state-sponsored doping program was implemented in Russia ahead of Sochi 2014, and that the team's exclusion from Rio was necessary.<sup>12</sup> Despite the IPC's hard stance against doping and cheating, it is clear that these unjust activities still occur in present day. The IPC and the organizing committee for the 2018 PyeongChang Paralympics must debate new measures and approaches to tackle the issues of doping and cheating across all Paralympic events.

### Doping and Athlete Eligibility

Anti-doping policies established by the WADA that many international sporting events including the Paralympics follow have proven to be ineffective, as evident by the continuing number of doping cases being revealed over the years. Though the WADA has taken steps to modernize its testing process, athletes continue to fund scientists who find different and more sophisticated ways for the players to cheat undetected.<sup>13</sup> Evolving from the 1980s in which athletes would just dilute their urine and remove possible traces of performance enhancing drugs in their system by putting as many

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<sup>7</sup> Grey-Thompson, Dame Tanni. "Cheating Does Happen in the Paralympics." The Telegraph. September 11, 2008. Accessed April 18, 2017. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/paralympic-sport/2798515/Cheating-does-happens-in-the-Paralympics-Paralympics.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "Media Centre." The IPC suspends the Russian Paralympic Committee with immediate effect. August 07, 2016. Accessed April 15, 2017. <https://www.paralympic.org/news/ipc-suspends-russian-paralympic-committee-immediate-effect>.

<sup>10</sup> World Anti-Doping Agency, or WADA, is an international agency established to implement consistent anti-doping regulations and rules to the international sporting community. WADA works in many different areas including education, scientific research, and athlete outreach.

<sup>11</sup> "Media Centre." IPC Statement – McLaren Independent Investigation into Sochi 2014 Doping Allegations. July 18, 2016. Accessed May 01, 2017. <https://www.paralympic.org/news/ipc-statement-mclaren-independent-investigation-sochi-2014-doping-allegations>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Goodyear, Sheena. "Anti-doping agencies can't keep pace with the science of cheating." CBCnews. November 11, 2015. Accessed April 15, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/sports/doping-cheats-culture-1.3312294>.



fluids as possible into their bodies, now some athletes resort to advanced doping strategies. For example, some athletes have practiced micro-dosing, in which small amounts of performance enhancement drugs are injected over a longer period of time to mask its presence in their drug testing.<sup>14</sup> As well some athletes have been able to experiment with gene-doping, in which a gene is directly transferred into an athlete's cells to be incorporated into their DNA, which is hard to detect.<sup>15</sup> These developments in doping strategies allow for a continuous cycle in which the WADA cannot keep up. The IPC and the organizing committee for the 2018 PyeongChang Paralympics should continue research into performance-enhancing drug testing that can keep up with the new advancements in doping struggles and end this vicious cycle. As well, the organizing group should investigate other effective methods to prevent doping besides medical testing.

With regards to athletes' eligibility in the Paralympic games, as made evident by the case of the Spanish basketball team at the 2000 Sydney games, the classification of athletes system is not foolproof. According to the IPC, all athletes competing in Paralympic sports, in theory, have an impairment that affects sports performance and results in a competitive disadvantage.<sup>16</sup> These impairments can be physical, visual, or intellectual.<sup>17</sup> There are eight different types of eligible physical impairments including impaired muscle power, diminished the passive range of movement, loss of limb or limb deficiency, leg-length difference, short stature, Hypertonia, Ataxia, and Athetosis.<sup>18</sup> Visual impairments are eligible when there is damage at least one component of the athlete's vision system such as the impairment of the visual cortex, and the intellectual impairment is eligible when the athlete is limited in their intellectual functions for instance and is diagnosed before the age of 18.<sup>19</sup> The IPC and the organizing committee for the upcoming Paralympic Games should formulate a plan that guarantees that every participant in the games is thoroughly tested to ensure they are in fact eligible athletes and that there are severe repercussions for individual athletes and states that attempt to break these rules.

### **Past Actions**

For years, the IPC, other international sporting committees and the WDA have worked together to execute the global anti-doping program. In 2003, such a program was enforced when WADA first adopted the World Anti-Doping Code, which all

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> "Layman's Guide to Paralympic Classification." Accessed May 01, 2017. [https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/document/120716152047682\\_ClassificationGuide\\_2.pdf](https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/document/120716152047682_ClassificationGuide_2.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



International sports federations like the IPC, were to follow.<sup>20</sup> The World Anti-Doping Code is the document that harmonizes anti-doping policies and regulations within sports organizations globally. It works to foster consistency among anti-doping organizations in various areas: testing; laboratories; Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs); the List of Prohibited Substances and Methods; and the protection of privacy and personal information.<sup>21</sup> Unifying the fight against doping addresses problems that previously arose from uncoordinated efforts, including, for example, a scarce amount of resources to conduct testing and further research.<sup>22</sup>

Recently, the fight against doping received assistance recently, as the WADA secured an extra £8.5 million to fund new research with the goal of discovering new ways to detect doping athletes and keep up with all the new strategies athletes have used to ensure their doping remains undetected.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, the money will be spent on identifying doping detection methods that go beyond the typical blood and urine analysis.<sup>24</sup> So far, the WADA has been able to secure such funding through the United States, Chinese and Turkish governments.<sup>25</sup> However, the money for the program, which is to last three years, can be raised up to £12 million if more states decide to participate and invest in this initiative.<sup>26</sup>

Like the United States, China, and Turkey, more national governments are becoming involved in the fight against doping. Some countries like Canada, for example, have an anti-doping domestic policy in place.<sup>27</sup> Canada implemented the "Canadian Policy Against Doping in Sport," which came into effect in 2011.<sup>28</sup> This policy outlines that the Canadian government will fight for an ethical sport system, and will do so by ensuring that Canadian sport-related organizations have clear rules and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> "The Code." World Anti-Doping Agency. March 10, 2017. Accessed May 01, 2017. <https://www.wada-ama.org/en/what-we-do/the-code>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Rumsby, Ben. "World Anti-Doping Agency secures a fresh £8.5m to fight drugs in sport." The Telegraph. September 04, 2014. Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/othersports/drugsinsport/11075812/World-Anti-Doping-Agency-secures-a-fresh-8.5m-to-fight-drugs-in-sport.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Government of Canada; Canadian Heritage; Communications. "Canadian Policy Against Doping in Sport – 2011." Government of Canada; Canadian Heritage; Communications. December 15, 2015. Accessed May 01, 2017. <http://canada.pch.gc.ca/eng/1414513466418/141451352>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



policies that reinforce the importance of clean sport and prevent doping for example.<sup>29</sup> As well, for instance, the Canadian government will ensure that there are funding programs in place that directly and indirectly tackle doping in sports.<sup>30</sup>

The United Nations' has also continued to support organizations such as WADA in the fight against doping. UNESCO is the first United Nations agency that has an institutional mandate in sports and the competency to address sport-related issues.<sup>31</sup> UNESCO continues to facilitate the global fight against doping through the "International Convention against Doping in Sport" which was adopted in October of 2005.<sup>32</sup> Participants in the convention actively promote supporting governments develop national anti-doping programs, like Canada implemented in 2011.<sup>33</sup> Also, UNESCO fights doping in sport through developing anti -doping educational programs that have the objective of promoting ethical values and principles in sports and informing young athletes about the consequences of doping, including the legal and medical repercussions.<sup>34</sup> Lastly, UNESCO established the Fund for the Elimination of Doping in Sport in 2008, which allows for Member States to make voluntary financial contributions to the cause.<sup>35</sup>

### Possible Solutions

To combat doping in sport, allocating funding towards research into new drugs and doping strategies is crucial. Developments in research can prove beneficial in deterring doping and maintaining the integrity of athletic competitions and the value of earning a Paralympic medal at the games. The IPC and other international organizations that wish to eradicate doping from sport should potentially urge countries to allocate more funding towards the development of such research with the objective of establishing ethical and fair athletic competition for the athletes. Furthermore, to deter doping and encourage drug-free sports, developing an education program for athletes is beneficial. The WDA offers many different tools to assist athletic organizations or states with their anti-doping education programs and help them educate athletes.<sup>36</sup> The

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> UNESCO and WADA | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Accessed May 01, 2017. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/anti-doping/unesco-and-wada/>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> "Education & Prevention." World Anti-Doping Agency. May 24, 2017. Accessed May 01, 2017. <https://www.wada-ama.org/en/education-prevention>. "Education & Prevention." World



organization provides tool kits of activities and different brochures regarding anti-doping for all related parties in sporting competitions from the coaches to the sports physicians.<sup>37</sup> Regarding the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing, the previously mentioned wheelchair basketball player indeed tested positive for a banned substance.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, the positive test came from an over the counter supplement that the athlete did not know contained a banned substance and as a result, took performance-enhancing drugs ignorantly.<sup>39</sup> Regardless of intent, the sanctions against doping must stay unified and consistent. However, with the proper education regarding the prohibited substances list established by international athletic organizations like the IPC or by national governments accidental doping can become a less prominent issue in the athletic community.

Ensuring that improvements are made to the disciplinary system, which would guarantee that the consequences for athletes or states outweigh the benefits of doping in sports may prove to be beneficial in the preparation of the 2018 PyeongChang Paralympics. Any suspected breach of the IPC Code of Ethics which states that all athletes must respect the IPC Anti-Doping Code and must continue to contribute to the creation of a drug-free sports environment for all Paralympic athletes in conjunction with the WADA currently allows the IPC Governing Board to determine unilaterally how to punish the offending parties.<sup>40</sup> Recently as stated previously, the IPC voted unanimously to ban the Russian team and its Paralympic committee from participating in the 2016 Rio Paralympics due to state-sponsored doping.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the Russian Paralympic Committee lost all rights and privileges of IPC membership that include giving the ability to vote at meetings with members.<sup>42</sup> These sanctions are put into place to maintain the fairness of the games and to establish fair competition for all Paralympic athletes globally.

The fight against doping in sports has been a long and strenuous battle that the IPC, WADA, and other global athletic governing bodies have dealt with for years. However, with the developments in sports-enhancing drugs and doping strategies, and

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Anti-Doping Agency. May 24, 2017. Accessed May 01, 2017. <https://www.wada-ama.org/en/education-prevention>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Grey-Thompson, Dame Tanni. "Cheating Does Happen in the Paralympics."

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> International Paralympic Committee. "IPC Code of Ethics." June 2013. Accessed April 13, 2017. [https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/document/130625114507663\\_IPC\\_Code\\_of\\_Ethics.pdf](https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/document/130625114507663_IPC_Code_of_Ethics.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> "Media Centre." The IPC suspends the Russian Paralympic Committee with immediate effect.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



cheating  
regarding the eligibility of athletes, the organizing body for the 2018 PyeongChang Paralympics have many obstacles to take into account.

### Questions to Consider

- What are some changes that need to be made to anti-doping regulations?
- What should the anti-doping education program for athletes entail?
- How can the IPC prevent non-eligible athletes (athletes without the impairments that classify them as a Para athlete) from participating in the Paralympics?



### Topic 2: Media Coverage of the Paralympics

#### Background

The word Paralympics derives from the Greek word *para*, meaning 'alongside'. Joined with the title "Olympics", 'Paralympics' proves to be a partner in competitive sport alongside the able-bodied and more mainstream Olympics. The origin of the word signifies that the Paralympics, which is the international sporting competition for athletes with disabilities, is intended to be a parallel set of games to the Olympic Games.<sup>43</sup> Despite this, the Paralympic Games are less known by an international audience and are equally given significantly less media coverage. In contemporary society, the media plays a crucial role of informing and broadcasting major ideas, events, and breaking news to the public. In fact, during the Olympics, many large media channels such as TSN and NBC Universal have non-stop coverage of the games throughout the entire competition.<sup>44</sup> At the London Olympics of 2012, international

viewers were able to watch the 10 820 athletes compete for the 970 medals 24 hours a day, due to intense media coverage<sup>45</sup>.

Impressively, Open Broadcast Software (OBS), the company in charge of broadcasting the Olympics and Paralympics, "will make available at 10.00 local time a daily, 5-minute international news package consisting of short extracts of newsworthy footage from the previous day..."<sup>46</sup>



*Two Paralympians being interviewed. Source: <http://paralympics.org.uk/about-us/press-office>*

<sup>43</sup> International Paralympic Committee. "History of Movement."

<sup>44</sup> Infront Sports and Media." Infront together with TV Media Sport secures broadcast agreements for Rio 2016 Olympic Games in eight additional territories." 22, June 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Sponsorship Intelligence. "London 2010 Olympic Games: Global Broadcast Report". 2012.

<sup>46</sup> "Rules for the use of short extracts for news reporting applicable for the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games – US Territory ." *International Paralympic Committee*, March 2016.



Whether to show a sporting competition or a private interview with a recent gold-medallist, the prominent coverage of the Olympics means that the public at large builds a connection to the athlete and feels a sense of national pride in the achievements of their countries representative athlete. This is, unfortunately, less commonplace with the Paralympics given the limited media coverage.

One of the main research studies that have analyzed this disparity has uncovered three main reasons for a lack of media coverage of the Paralympics. Anne V. Golden of Brigham Young University found in her research the three main reasons to be a lack of interest from the public, coverage of the event is considered costly and the Paralympics is not considered to be 'real sport' by the public.<sup>47</sup> The reduced coverage of the Paralympics reflects a greater issue prevalent in our society which is the minimal understanding about disability. At large, this issue affects all individuals with disabilities who face barriers to accessibility on a daily basis due to a lack of understanding and awareness. In terms of the subject at hand, the issue primarily affects Paralympic athletes, who train extremely hard to overcome their challenges and demonstrate that they are not limited by their physical disabilities. The courage, perseverance and strong will of these athletes are a source of great inspiration for many. However, due to less media attention, many people are unaware of these individuals' athletic journeys. For example, many people are unaware that the most accurate distance shooter in the world, is a Paralympian.<sup>48</sup> This is one example of many that show how the lack of media coverage of the Paralympics affects both the athletes and the public at large.

### **Actions**

Media coverage and public awareness of the Paralympics has increased since the first Paralympic games in Italy in 1960. In fact, the sporting event has grown throughout the years in which many organizing bodies were founded to better govern and promote the Paralympics. For example, the International Sport Organisation for the Disabled (ISOD) was established in 1964 following a public study on the problems of sport for persons with impairments commissioned by the International Working Group on Sport for the Disabled. The establishment of the ISOD helped to improve progress of the games by expanding the accessibility for the visually impaired, amputees, people with cerebral palsy and paraplegics. Similarly, the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association and the International Blind Sports Federation were created in 1964 to better coordinate access and participation in sporting events. Eventually in 1982

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<sup>47</sup> Affleck, John. "Why do the Paralympics Get So Little Media Attention in the United States." *The Conversation*. September 16, 2016.

<sup>48</sup> *Supra*. Note 2



## Paralympic Committee

the various organizations merged to form the International Co-Coordinating Committee Sports for the Disabled in the World to better coordinate the games. Seven years later the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) was founded as the global governing body of the international games. The IPC has actively pledged to promote visibility and awareness of the Paralympics. In fact, the lack of media coverage of the Paralympics has been directly addressed by the IPC in their Strategic Plan of 2015-2018. A major strategic priority is to “maximize the global reach of the next three editions of the Paralympic Games in terms of broadcasting and new media, specifically targeting an increase in brand awareness in key territories (in particular the United States).”<sup>49</sup>



*Paralympic British team advertisement. Source: [http://static.adweek.com/adweek.com-prod/wp-content/uploads/files/news\\_article/meet-the-superhuman-hed-2013.jpg](http://static.adweek.com/adweek.com-prod/wp-content/uploads/files/news_article/meet-the-superhuman-hed-2013.jpg)*

To this effect, there are some countries that have made significant strides in addressing this issue. For example, in the last Paralympics in Rio, Japan was one of the countries around the world which had its public broadcaster NHK telecast the Paralympic Games live. Additionally, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) announced that the Sochi 2014 and Rio 2016 Paralympic Games would receive 116 combined hours of coverage in the United States which is significantly greater than

<sup>49</sup> International Paralympic Committee. (IPC) Strategic Plan 2015 to 2018.



coverage time from past Olympics.<sup>50</sup> Finally, Canada also made substantial improvement in the broadcasting time allotted to the 2016 Rio Olympics with an unprecedented 1000 hours of multi-platform coverage from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Additionally, CBC-Radio Canada had increased coverage from past years to provide almost 700 hours of French coverage of the Paralympics.<sup>51</sup>

### Possible Solutions

While this progress signifies advancement on the issue, it is nonetheless crucial that there is greater media presence in future Paralympic competitions. While the IPC has been working diligently in coordination with other organizations to improve visibility and coverage of the Paralympics worldwide, it is important that the IPC also engage with civil society groups that work in the realm of disability advocacy such as Disability Rights International and the International Disability Alliance. Also, the IPC should equally engage National governments to advance the fight for better visibility of the Paralympics. By engaging multiple actors in the process of promoting coverage and awareness of the Paralympic games, it is likely that the public understanding of the Paralympics and of the barriers facing disabled individuals will improve in the future.

### Questions to Consider

- How can the organization increase visibility for the Paralympics and Paralympians?
- Does the media have the responsibility to broadcast the Paralympic Games despite of ratings?
- How would increased visibility in the media affect Paralympian performance?

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<sup>50</sup> Wolbring, Gregor. "Paralympics vs Olympic Coverage Uneven at Best." *The Conversation*. United Kingdom. September 8, 2012

<sup>51</sup> CBC Sports. "Rio 2016, CBC Sports to Provide Extensive Coverage." August 30 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/sports/paralympics/rio-2016-paralympics-1.3740283>



### Topic 3: Participation of Athletes from Developing Countries

#### Introduction

The Paralympics Committee seeks to increase the participation of athletes with disabilities from developing countries in all Paralympics to come. To do so, it is necessary to analyze current trends and data, highlight challenges athletes with disabilities from developing countries face, and discuss examples of initiatives that can serve as an inspiration. Although overall there has been progress in increasing participation of such athletes, there is certainly more work to be done.

#### Participation of Disabled Athletes from Developing Countries

As this section will show, clear discrepancies exist between athletes with disabilities from developed and developing countries. This section seeks to scratch the surface of the overall topic by presenting data that compares these athletes. The lack of

When compared to the 2012 London Olympics, the number of participating countries and athletes in the 2012 London Paralympics is significantly less. At the Paralympics, there were 4237 athletes, compared to 10 500 at the Olympics.<sup>52 53</sup> Similarly, at the 2012 London Paralympics, there were 164 participating countries.<sup>54</sup> The 2012 London Olympics had 204 countries represented; more than the 194 sovereign states recognized by the United Nations, as some territories chose to compete independently.<sup>55</sup> When participation for the 2012 London Paralympics is divided by continent, the differences in representation become even more apparent. This is shown in Table 1.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Peter Bukhala, “Sports Equipment and Technology in Development Nations: Grass root initiatives to enhance parasports in Kenya,” (presentation, Vista Conference on Equipment and Technology in Paralympic Sports, Bonn, Germany, May 1-4, 2013) p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> “London Olympics by the numbers,” *CNN*, July 27, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> “London 2012: Which Countries Are (and Aren’t) in the Olympics?” *Political Geography Now*, July 26, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Peter Bukhala, “Sports Equipment and Technology in Development Nations,” p. 4.



Continent	Number of Participating Countries	Total Athletes	Percentage of Countries from each Continent
Europe	47	2085	49.2%
Asia	41	854	20.2%
America	28	803	19%
Africa	41	307	7.2%
Oceania	8	188	4.4%
Total	164	4237	100

*Table 1: Participants at the 2012 London Paralympics*

At the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, more than 50% of the 3951 athletes came from 11 of the 146 participating countries.<sup>57</sup> However, an estimated 80% of all people with disabilities reside in developing countries.<sup>58</sup> The elite disabled athlete paradigm refers to the notion that medals are disproportionately won by athletes from just a few countries, such as the U.S., China, Australia, Germany, and Canada.<sup>59</sup> This paradigm can be seen in Figure 1.<sup>60</sup>

There are several reasons why a lack of economic development is correlated with a lack of sports development, such as inadequate physical education in school, a lack of access to equipment and training. The second section of this topic will explore these issues in more depth, along with social barriers these athletes face. The last section will look at examples of initiatives focused on increasing participation of athletes from developing countries.

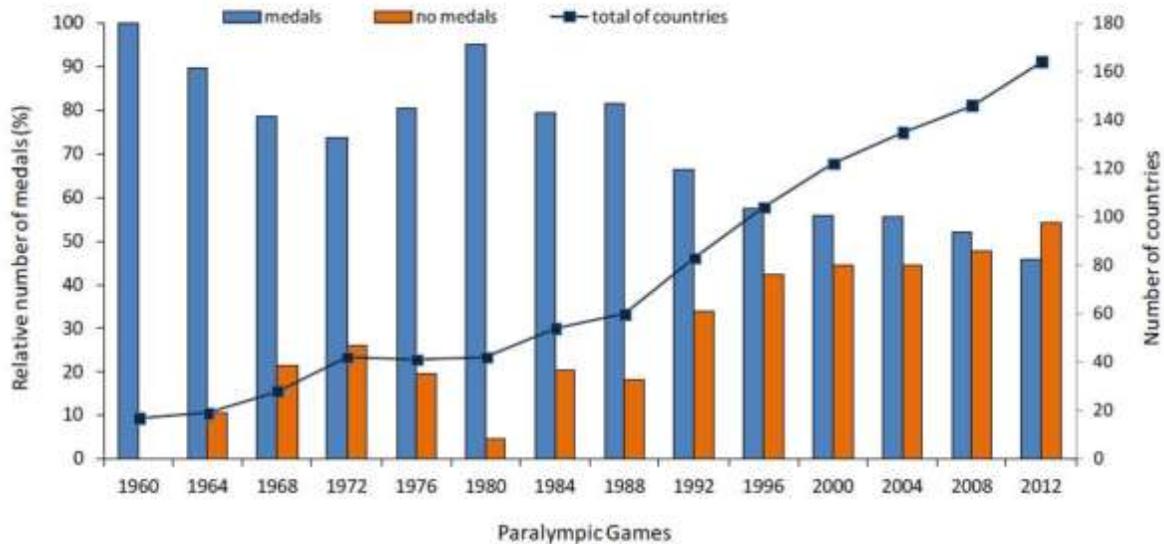
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<sup>57</sup> “Paralympian Development Feature: Scratching the Surface,” *International Paralympic Committee (IPC)*, December 26, 2011.

<sup>58</sup> *World report on Disability*, World Health Organization and World Bank (2011), p. 262.

<sup>59</sup> Campbell, Mauerberg-deCastro, and Travares, “The global reality of the Paralympic Movement.”

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 1: A comparison of countries that have (and have not) won medals at the Paralympics**

### **Challenges Faced by Athletes with Disabilities from Developing Countries**

There are several reasons why athletes with disabilities from developing countries fail to place as often as their peers from developed countries. Not only do these athletes face a lack of resources, but they also must overcome many social barriers. Although many of these social barriers exist in developed countries as well, the effect of such barriers is exacerbated when combined with problems stemming from a lack of capital and the disability itself.

#### *Inadequate physical education*

Although the data is limited, many of the least developed countries (LDCs) schedule minimal physical education in their school curriculum. Where it is scheduled, many countries fail to actually achieve the scheduled hours.<sup>61</sup> This issue furthermore brings up a number of barriers children with disabilities in developing countries must overcome to even reach point, such as adequate access to equipment to participate in sports and facilities that can accommodate such equipment.

<sup>61</sup> Wladimir Andreff, "The correlation between economic underdevelopment and sport," *European Sport Management Quarterly* 1:4 (2001): 253, doi: 10.1080/16184740108721902.



### *Lack of access to adequate training and equipment*

One issue many athletes face is getting access to training facilities and coaches. Often, athletes must move to a city centre in order to receive training.<sup>62</sup> This in itself may be extremely difficult to achieve for those athletes that do not already live in large urban areas. Not only do some of these athletes do not have access to transportation due to financial means, but some of them may also be unable to leave their job without external support from sponsorships or the government.<sup>63</sup> Thus, only athletes with some financial and familial support really have the opportunity to move to another city to receive intensive training.

Another problem athletes with disabilities face is lack of access to adequate training equipment. For example, at the 2012 London Paralympics, delegations from developing countries often did not compete in events that needed up-to-date equipment, such as wheelchairs, prosthesis, and bicycles.<sup>64</sup> To have equipment comparable to that of athletes in developed countries, it often must be imported, which can be extremely expensive. As a result, many athletes use second-hand, donated equipment, which is still too outdated for them to compete in.<sup>65</sup>

The lack of access to equipment can sometimes segregate which athletes are able to participate based on type of disability they have. For example, Kenya sent thirteen athletes to the 2012 London Paralympics. Of those thirteen, only one used a wheelchair. The remainder of the team is composed of runners who are blind or partially-blind.<sup>66</sup>

### *Gender gaps*

Challenges faced by athletes with disabilities depend for female participants. Overall, there are considerably more male than female athletes participating in the Paralympics, a fact that is also true for the Olympics. There are also significantly more male than female events in the Paralympics. While the number of female events is increasing, with 24 new events added from 2008 to 2012, the number of male events is

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<sup>62</sup> Debra Frances Campbell, Elaine Mauerberg-deCastro, and Carolina Paioli Travares, "The global reality of the Paralympic Movement: Challenges and opportunities in disability sport," *Motriz: Revista de Educação Física* 22 (2016): 111-123, doi: 10.1590/S1980-6574201600030001.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

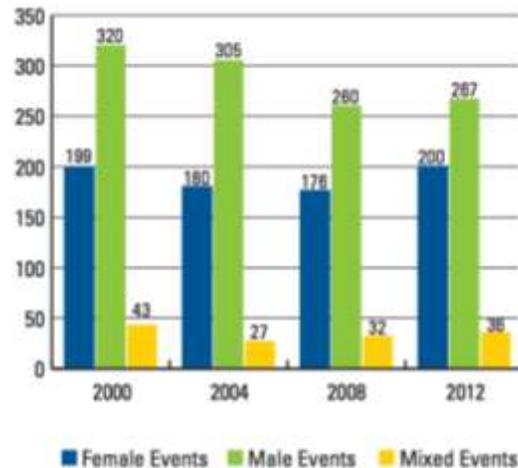
<sup>64</sup> Peter Bukhala, "Sports Equipment and Technology in Development Nations," p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Bukhala, "Sports Equipment and Technology in Development Nations," p. 5-11.

<sup>66</sup> Peter Walker, "Paralympics tries to shake off image as games for rich countries," *The Guardian*, August 30, 2012.



increasing simultaneously, with seven new events added from 2008 to 2012.<sup>67</sup> The male/female divide can be seen in Figure 2.<sup>68</sup>



**Figure 2: The number of Paralympic events by gender in 2004, 2008, and 2012**

### *Social, cultural, and religious prejudice*

While there is not much explicit research on the subject, problems affecting both male and female athletes are religious, cultural, and social barriers.<sup>69</sup> Although it is difficult to quantify how much of an affect this factor really has on participation, it is certainly something that should be noted. One example of this the Nigerian wheelchair basketball team which was not allowed to practice in the indoor court because officials are scared they might scratch the wooden floor.<sup>70</sup>

Michael Oliver, a disability activist, strives to explain the difference between the “personal tragedy theory” and the “social oppression theory.” The personal tragedy theory refers to the notion that it is the disability itself which hinders disabled persons from leading everyday lives, whereas the social oppression theory argues that it is society’s lack of accessibility and compromise that causes the disability to be a problem.<sup>71</sup> In other words, as Erin O’Brien wrote in an article in *The Conversation*, in

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> M. Smith and A. Wrynn, *Women in the 2012 Olympics and Paralympic Games: An Analysis of Participation and Leadership in Opportunities*, Ann Arbor, MI: SHARP Center for Women and Girls, 2013, p. 15.

<sup>69</sup> sportanddev.org, “Barriers to participation,” <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more/disability/sport-and-adapted-physical-activity-apa/barriers-participation>.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Walker, “Paralympics tries to shake off image as Games for rich countries.”

<sup>71</sup> Erin O’Brien, “Disabled by society: Paralympians face challenges beyond the field,” *The Conversation*, August 29, 2012.



“social theory of disability... disability is typically understood as the result of a disconnect between the individual and their environment.”<sup>72</sup>

### Initiatives Towards Increasing Participation

Luckily, there have been several initiatives, both international and domestic, that work towards a common goal of increasing participation. This subtopic will look at some examples of initiatives from both large and small organizations. Bear in mind that while this are just a small selection of the many organizations that work towards increasing participation, and in no way is this intended to be all-encompassing.

In 2011, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), sponsored by the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) and Charity and Sport, held a regional training camp in Zambia.<sup>73</sup> A similar training camp was also held in 2011 in El Salvador. The camp, while filled with athletes excited to participate and display their talent, also showed several issues that athletes in developing countries face. Only one athlete that attended had the proper equipment, and the facilities failed to adequately accommodate the disabled athletes.<sup>74</sup>

Motivation, a British-based charity, is focused on designing wheelchairs for a variety of environments. The IPC asked Motivation to developed quality sport wheelchairs that can sell for under \$1000.<sup>75</sup> Motivation succeeded in reaching that goal, and also donates 100% of their profits into charity projects aimed at disabled athletes in developing countries.<sup>76</sup>

Handicap International, an organization located in 60 different countries, receives financial and human resources from developed countries and sends them to developing countries.<sup>77</sup> Like both of the former initiatives mentions, Handicap International seeks to provide training and equipment to disabled athletes, among several other ways of increasing the lives of disabled people. In 1997, Handicap International was a co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and is one of the largest disability-focused non-profits in the world.

### Questions to Consider

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> “Paralympian Development Feature,” International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> “IPC Supports Design Low-Cost Racing Chair,” International Paralympic Committee (IPC), April 17, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Motivation, “Sports wheelchairs,” <https://www.motivation.org.uk/Pages/Category/sports-wheelchairs>.

<sup>77</sup> sportanddev.org, “Handicap International,” <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more/disability/actors-involved-sport-disability/international-organisations/handicap-0>.



## Paralympic Committee

- Do you think developed countries should put more effort in increasing athletes with disabilities from developing countries' access to equipment, training, and facilities?
- Should developed countries or non-profits develop programs that allow athletes with disabilities to train in countries with better facilities, or should they focus on building better facilities in their home countries?
- What are the best solutions, if any, to solve the elite disabled athlete paradigm?
- How much of an impact do you think social barriers?



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