

Management of Mega Sports Events: The Case of the 2010 East Africa University Games

By

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Introduction

The benefits of sports to individual participants and society are well known and documented. Participation in sports leads to improvement in physical fitness which in turn contributes to the physical and psycho-social health and well being of the active participants (Mwisukha, Njororai and Onywera, 2003). It is a clearly recognized fact that individuals who engage in regular exercise and sports enjoy psychological advantages of mental alertness, long spans of concentration, self-discipline, respect for others, confidence, assertiveness and are better placed to cope with and/ or manage stress. The social benefits include inculcation of the spirit of sportsmanship, social interaction/ bonding and team work survival skills

It is in view of the inherent benefits of sporting activities and their popularity that compels universities to direct their efforts towards embracing and developing strong sports programmes for students and staff. Since sport is an activity that appeals to and attracts the interests of many young people, universities also use it (sport) as a tool for marketing their institutions, programmes and other non-sports activities. It is also considered a potent instrument of keeping students positively engaged during their free time, diverting their attention from crime and anti-social behavior. In addition, this helps them overcome stress related to strenuous academic work.

In order for universities and colleges to effectively run their sports programmes, they have put in place Sports and Games Departments which oversee and coordinate sporting activities in the respective institutions. Through these sports departments, universities organize both intramural and extramural sports programmes for students and other members of the university communities. The Inter-university Games that are held on a regular basis from the national, regional, continental and international levels are an example of the large extra-mural sports events that involve a largest

number of universities and colleges. The 7th edition of the East Africa University Games that were hosted by Kenyatta University in the year 2010 is a good example of the extra-mural sports events for university students.

1.2.0 East Africa University Games

The first edition of the revived East Africa University Games was held in 1999 at Egerton University. Other hosts have been Makerere University (2001), University of Dar es Salaam (2002), Kenyatta University (2004), and National Universities Sports Federation of Uganda (2006 and 2009). These games bring together teams drawn from all the universities and University Colleges in the East African region which comprises of five countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi). However, from the year 2009, the membership was expanded to include Southern Sudan and the countries in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea). The Games are organized under the auspices of the East Africa University Sports Federation (EAUSF) and are modeled on the Olympic Games in all the major sports disciplines. The East Africa University games include football, volleyball, netball, basketball, hockey, handball, rugby, athletics, scrabble, chess, tennis, table tennis, badminton, swimming, taekwondo and karate. However the number to be included in any edition of the games is determined by the capacity of the host University.

The objectives of the East Africa University Games are to:

- i) Promote interaction and socialization amongst students in the universities within the region.
- ii) Promote unity and regional integration.
- iii) Serve as a forum for education and exchange of ideas during and beyond the competition venues.
- iv) Promote intellectual and professional growth amongst the participants through such fora as pre-games conferences, workshops and/or seminars.
- v) Provide opportunities for participating individuals and teams to exploit their talents through sports and games.

1.3.0 The 7th Edition of the East Africa University Games

The 7th Edition of the East Africa University Games was hosted by Kenyatta University from the 16th -21st December 2010 after the institution won the bid to do so. This was the second time for the

university to host the games, having hosted them successfully in December 2004. During this edition, thirty seven (37) institutions drawn from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zanzibar took part while a total of three thousand four hundred and thirty five (3435) students participated.

Ndejje University, Uganda emerged the overall winner followed by Kampala International University while Kenyatta University was the second runners-up. Given that the games were a major event that required elaborate preparations and resources for successful hosting, this paper gives a highlight on how the games were organized and managed by the university.

1.4.0 Organization and Management of the 2010 East Africa University Games

1.4.1 Constituting of the Games Organizing the Committee

In order to effectively plan and manage the games, an organizing committee of 24 (twenty four) carefully selected members was set up by the university management. The following factors were considered in selecting the members of the Games Organizing committee:

- i) Relevant expertise in management of sports and similar undertakings.
- ii) Previous experience in organizing similar events.
- iii) Specific expertise in various aspects and relevance to the hosting e.g. catering, security, accommodation, and so on.
- iv) Marketing of the University through sports.

1.4.2 Formation of Sub-Committees

During the initial meetings of the Games organizing committee, a checklist of all activities that were crucial to the successful hosting of the games were identified and outlined. The activities were categorized into 12 (twelve) groups; secretariat, accommodation, catering, facilities and equipment, finance, medical, protocol, publicity and sponsorships, security, technical matters and transport. For the purpose of incorporating an academic and research component in the games, preparations for a pre-games symposium were also undertaken. Each of the identified groups of activities relating to the organizing and hosting of the games as well as the pre-games symposium was assigned to a sub-committee. Each of the sub-committees comprised of a section of members of the games organizing committee (LOC) and a few other members who were co-opted. The terms of reference for each subcommittee were specified. A checklist of all the preparatory activities, including deadlines for accomplishment of tasks that were assigned to each subcommittee was formulated, discussed and agreed upon.

1.4.3 Activities Undertaken to Prepare for the Games.

i) Meetings of the organizing committee

To ensure successful hosting of the games, the organizing committee held a total of 18 (eighteen) meetings to share ideas on activities to be undertaken and monitor the progress realized at every stage by the subcommittees.

ii) Budgeting and Financial Management

Organizers of any sports event must identify areas that require funding and find ways of availing the required funds (Masterman, 2004; Solomon, 2002). Accordingly, the organizing committee of the games drew a budget for the games. Four phases were involved in this process:

- Each subcommittee drew its budget and submitted to the finance subcommittee.
- A draft consolidated budget was then made by the finance subcommittee.
- A draft consolidated budget was discussed, rationalized and ratified by the Games organizing committee.
- The budget was submitted for approval by the management of the university.

In addition to budgeting, all the other financial transactions of the Games were managed by a finance subcommittee. This included purchasing of required items, collection of participation fees from the teams and payments to the officials of the games.

iii) Sourcing for funds

- Colossal sums of money were required to run the games. Generally, the areas that needed funds included transport, secretarial services, accommodation, catering, preparation of sports facilities, purchase of equipment, medical services, purchase of trophies, preparation of participation certificates, publicity, security, allowances for officials of the games and special diet for participants.
- Apart from relying on the funds received from the teams as participation fees, the publicity and sponsorship subcommittee sought sponsorships from the corporate organizations and raised some of the funds from exhibitors during the games.

iv) The Secretariat Services

During a major sports event, the services of a secretariat are important in relaying information, keeping records and documentation (Graham, Goldblatt, Neirotti and Delpy, 1995; Supovitz, 2005).

It is in view of this that the organizing committee of the 7th edition of the East Africa University Games set up a secretariat. The specific tasks of the secretariat included:

- Liaising with the East Africa Universities Sports Federation officials.
- Keeping records of all the meetings of the organizing committee.
- Sending out invitations to the university teams, officials, media personnel, medical personnel and guests.
- Coordinating the operations of all the other sub-committees.
- Monitoring adherence to deadlines set by the organizing committee.
- Coordinating the awarding of medals, trophies and certificates to the teams and participants.
- Vetting and accrediting of games participants and officials.
- Preparing of the final report on the games.

v) Publicity for the Games

The importance and magnitude of a sports event is dependent on the number of people that it attracts (Jordan, Tyson, Hayle and Truly, 2010; Solomon, 2002). As such, concerted efforts were made to attract public attention to the 7th edition of the East Africa University Games through the electronic and print mass media. In addition, in the run-up to the games, a special ceremony was held to launch and unveil the mascot for the games. A publicity consultant was also hired to work with the publicity and sponsorship subcommittee towards the marketing and publicity efforts.

vii) Medical Services

Participants in sporting activities are vulnerable to injuries (Onywera, Njororai and Mwisukha, 2003). The causes of the injuries range from those that arise from actual play such as those caused by opponent(s), play surface (facility), equipment used and prevailing weather conditions (Onywera, Njororai and Mwisukha, 2003). To ensure that athletes who got injured or fell ill were attended to, a highly specialized and coordinated medical team was set up consisting of the Kenyatta University's Health Unit medical personnel, the Emergency Team from the Kenya Red Cross, Armed Forces medical personnel from Kahawa Barracks (our neighbours), counselors from Kenyatta National Hospital (the leading referral hospital in East Africa) and volunteer first aiders from the students' population were recruited. Finally, essential drugs were solicited from various Pharmaceutical Companies to supplement the stocks at the University Health Unit. During the actual games the following measures were taken:

- Other than having First Aid points at every venue of the competitions, a separate medical clinic was set up at the Games village to handle most of the medical cases that arose.
- Ambulances were on standby throughout the games for use in evacuating critically injured or ill patients to nearby hospitals for specialized attention.
- The Kenyatta University's physiotherapy unit was on hand to attend to severe injuries.
- By the end of the 6-days' games, a total of 171 cases of injuries and illnesses were successfully and efficiently attended to.

viii) Accommodation and Catering for Athletes and Officials

Since the games were scheduled to take place within a period of one week, suitable and adequate accommodation was identified for the athletes and their officials. A games village consisting of the university's students' hostels was identified and set aside for the 3,435 participants in the games. The pre-games tasks that were undertaken to ensure proper accommodation for the participants included repairs on the hostels, fumigation and procurement of more linen. Adjacent to the Games village were two spacious dining halls that were identified and used for catering services. The catering subcommittee of the games organizing committee made prior arrangements for procurement of foodstuff and hired more personnel to assist with catering services. Packed lunches were prepared and availed to the teams that held their competitions using facilities outside the host institution.

ix) Identification and Preparation of the Games Facilities

Masterman (2004) and Solomon (2002) emphasize that sports events organizers must direct special attention towards ensuring that suitable and adequate facilities are identified or made available for the given sports events. Facilities must be located in venues that are easily accessible and properly marked in line with international specifications. During the university games under review, the responsibilities relating to facilities for the sports disciplines were assigned to a Facilities Subcommittee. The tasks that were undertaken included:

- Identification and coordinating of repairs on available institutional facilities.
- Identification and hire of sports facilities outside the hosting institution.
- Preparation of the facilities to ensure they met international set standards.
- Coordinating the construction of some of the facilities that were required for the games such as extra toilets and basketball courts.

xi) Technical Services

The technical areas and activities of a sports event are concerned with regulating play, ensuring fairness and discipline (Jordan, Tyson, Hayle and Truly, 2010; Goldbatt, Nelson and International Special Events Society, 2001). The technical activities for the East Africa University Games that were carried out included:

- Reviewing of rules and regulations of the games in consultation with the technical arm of the East African Universities Sports Federation.
- Preparing and availing the required score-sheet booklets for all the sports disciplines.
- Making of draws and fixtures for the competitions across the various venues and ensuring adherence to the competition schedules.
- Handling of competition disputes.
- Tallying of scores and preparation of final results and medal tallies.

xi) Transport Arrangements and Services

Like any other major sports event, the 7th East Africa University Games had enormous requirements in terms of transport. Transport services were required in the run-up to and during the games. The Transport Subcommittee therefore provided special transport for the secretariat, catering, security and health units to support the Games. Given that competitions in some of the sports disciplines were conducted using facilities outside the host institution, shuttle transport was organized for the affected teams on a daily basis.

xii) Entertainment Arrangements

In order to spice-up the games, entertainment arrangements were put in place. This involved availing the necessary sound systems and sourcing for entertainers during the opening and closing ceremonies of the games, as well as during the entire period of the games.

xiii) Security Arrangements and Services

During sports events, participants' safety must be observed and ensured by making elaborate security arrangements (Graham, Goldblatt, Neirotti and Delpy, 1995). In line with this requirement, the organizing committee of the 2010 East Africa University Games constituted a Security Subcommittee that comprised of highly specialized security personnel and mandated with the responsibility of ensuring provision of security within the host institution, other external competition venues and at the Games Village.

Elaborate security arrangements that covered all the areas were put in place. Other than relying on the host institution's internal security personnel only, the services of the Kenya Police were also enlisted. Surveillance cameras and security lights were installed in strategic places of the Games Village and entertainment areas. Security checks and surveillance were enhanced at the University's entry and exit points, and teams were escorted to their competition venues by security personnel.

1.5.0 Outstanding Achievements in the Organization and Management of the Games

1. Timely drawing and approval of the budget for the games
2. Activation of dedicated and interactive games website
3. Operation of a media centre that ensured efficient transmission of results to media houses.
4. Successful hosting of the largest edition of the East Africa University Games.

1.6.0 Challenges Faced in Managing the Games

In spite of the successes achieved in terms of preparing and managing the 2010 East Africa University Games, a number of challenges were faced. The main ones included:

- i) Unavailability of adequate facilities for some of the sports disciplines at the hosting institution. This necessitated the hiring of other venues, some of which were in fairly far off places.
- ii) Insufficient sponsorship for the Games. In spite of concerted efforts that were made to secure such sponsorships, only a handful of sponsors responded. This in turn, pressure on the Games Budget.
- iii) The introduction of new rules by EAUSF on eligibility and compliance deadlines which some universities did not adhere to. The attempt to enforce these rules put a lot of pressure of the LOC and led to disqualification of a good number of the teams from participating in the games.
- iv) The accreditation process started late leading to congestion and delays in the registration process.
- v) Poor vetting procedures for participants that undermined the purpose of adopting stringent eligibility criteria put in place for the games.

1.7.0 Recommendations for Future Editions of the Games

- i) Introduction of pre-qualification criteria at the national level that would lead to certainty on the number of entries for each discipline. The certainty of the number of teams involved would greatly encourage many universities to host and also attract more sponsorship.
- ii) Decentralizing the vetting process to individual disciplines to enhance efficiency and compliance.
- iii) Sensitize all delegates and participating institutions on the need to adhere to set deadlines to avoid unnecessary pressure on the host and disappointment that comes with disqualification.
- iv) Concerted efforts by all delegates and the university management to eliminate or minimize illegibility cases.
- v) Introduction of sanctions such as fines and disqualification from participating in future editions.
- vi) EASUF solicits for a main long-term sponsor of the Games so that the hosting universities are mandated to look for any other additional sponsors.

1.8.0 Conclusion

Elaborate arrangements and sufficient resources are crucial for successful mounting of sports events of this magnitude. A number of experts in relevant fields need to be involved in the entire process. A checklist of pertinent activities, schedule of deadlines and identification of persons responsible for various activities must be worked out well in advance. There must be effective monitoring of progress, flexibility to change with changing circumstances and encouraging diverse views to enrich the organization of the games.

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