

## SPORT VOLUNTEERISM AS A TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE SPORTS ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Sport at any level is a social activity and event that requires human and material resources. The inadequacy of sports personnel for effective sports administration and development can be augmented with the services of volunteers. Sports volunteers add to the sports human capacity. In recent times, most sports administrators call on volunteers for successful sports administration. Volunteers have assisted in the administration of sports competitions such as World Championships, Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, All African Games, National Sports Festival, among others. Outside sports competitions, sports volunteers like retired and non-retired coaches and elite athletes can assist in grassroots sports development by helping in the establishment of sports clubs and academy for youths to develop their sports talents. Retired and non-retired elite athletes and coaches with good educational background can offer to serve as instructors in sports institutes for training of sports personnel. Some of the sports volunteers in Nigeria are unemployed youths who always expect financial reward for services rendered before or at the end of the competition. During sports competitions, some of the sports volunteers face challenges such as poor identification, lack of communication equipment, poor rapport and communication between sports volunteers and other sports participants, and poor knowledge and understanding of the terrain of sports venues and road networks. It was recommended that proper identification tags or cards should be provided for sports volunteers; necessary communication equipment should be provided for the sports volunteers during competition. Again, sports volunteers with good knowledge and understanding of the terrain of sports venues and road networks should be used; and sports volunteers should be well integrated into sports programme by the sports organizers.*

**Keywords:** Grassroot, reward, youths, finance, challenges.

### INTRODUCTION

The administration of mega or small-scale, recreational or competitive sports programme in every society requires human and material resources. One of the challenges facing the administration and development of sports at any level and society is inadequate personnel or manpower. The inadequacy of personnel needed for any event or programme can be augmented through the use of volunteers. Volunteer as an individual who offers his/her labour, knowledge, skills, and experience at no wage cost to a utilizing organization (Monga, 2006). Throughout the world, volunteers are utilized by various organizations for various events. Volunteers have become a vital part of ensuring the efficiency of events (Schuyler, 2008). Volunteers are involved in sports. Sport volunteers as those participating in roles undertaken to support, arrange and/or run organized sport and physical activity (Australian Bureau Statistics, 2002). It is obvious that employed staff of sports clubs, sports associations, sports agencies, and sports ministries may never be adequate for effective and efficient administration and development of sports events especially mega sports events. Volunteers are important in the successful implementation of sports developmental programmes at the local, national and international levels. Sports volunteering involves individuals helping without any remuneration in a sport setting via a formal setting (Gratton, et al., 1997).

Sporting events around the world regardless of the size tend to rely on volunteers for the efficiency and execution of their events (Downward and Ralston, 2005). The role of volunteers is widely recognized as contributing an important economic and cultural dimension to the effective operation of mega sporting events (Ingerson, 2001). The contribution of volunteers to the success of 2000 Sydney Olympic Games was acknowledged thus,

"Without the personal investment of the volunteers, these mega-events could simply not have been arranged. This fact was nowhere more recognized than at the conclusion of the Sydney Olympic Games when volunteers were given the chance to take up free tickets to the Olympic closing ceremony and later when the central business district of Sydney was closed for half a work day to provide the volunteers with their own ticker-tape parade" p. 110 (Kemp, 2002) .

Volunteers have become essential to the delivery of sport and recreation services, adding several hundred dollars of value per capita to the contribution that sport and recreation make to gross domestic product (Green and Chalip, 2004).

In sport volunteering, the love of sport and the identification with sport may stimulate people to volunteer in sport-related activities (Daly, 1991). Volunteers contribute their time or efforts without coercion or any financial rewards (Henderson, 1985; Smith, 1994). Sport volunteering is one of the most important types of volunteering activities (Hwang, 2010). The involvement of sport volunteers is the key to the success and long term sustainability of sport clubs, sport organizations, and sport events (Ringuet, et al., 2008). They further noted that without volunteers, the sport system could not operate and there is growing cognizance of the need to better manage and nurture volunteers. Sport volunteers participate in a wide variety of formally and informally designated roles and positions to support, arrange and/or run organized sport and physical activity (Australian Bureau Statistics, 2002). The roles include serving as coach, instructor, or teacher, referee or umpire, committee member or administrator, scorer or timekeeper, and medical support.

More than 10,000 volunteers gave a million hours to the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, 6,000 volunteers contributed 50, 000 hours to the London marathon, 5,000 helped out at the Wimbledon and 1,200 at the Open Golf (Russell Commission, 2005). Rivers State Local Organizing Committee (LOC) of the 17th National Sports Festival engaged about 4000 persons as volunteers to meet challenges and ensure a smooth festival (Beemene, 2011). According to Beemene, more volunteers were required to cater for the welfare of the over 16,000 athletes and officials coming for the festival. The number, efficiency and effectiveness of volunteers should be considered by organizers of any sporting event. The number of volunteers engaged or to be engaged for a sports programme or competition depends on many factors such as the nature, level or type of competition; number of competitive events; expected number of competitors, officials, fans and spectators; location and terrain of competition venues, and how successful the sports organizers want the sports programme or event to be.

Volunteering is not a substitute for paid job and volunteers do not replace paid workers and do not constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers (Cordingley, 2000). Volunteerism is a service-delivery venture by an individual or group to an individual, group or association without compulsion and expectation of financial rewards. It could be deduced that the characteristics of sports volunteerism include; sports volunteerism centres on sports programmes (competitive or recreational, mega or small-scale sports programmes); sports volunteerism is a human service (service rendered by sports administrators, athletes, coaches, officials, spectators, fans, media and health personnel, sports associations, sports enthusiasts, members of the society, etc), and sports volunteerism is sacrificial (sacrifice of time, finance, energy, knowledge, skill, expertise, effort, properties, etc). Again, sports volunteer service is offered to human society (service received by members of the society such as sports administrators, athletes, coaches, officials, sports associations, sports clubs, spectators, fans, peers, parents, siblings, media personnel, etc); sports volunteerism is voluntary (absence of coercion or force to participate in sports service delivery); sports volunteerism requires absence of financial rewards (salaries, allowances, etc), and sports volunteer enjoys internal reward for service delivery (joy, fun, satisfaction, etc). Sports volunteerism ensures that the recipients of services provided by the

sports volunteer benefit and enjoy the services offered (happiness, feeling safe, fun, satisfaction, etc); sports volunteerism is goal-directed (to achieve effective organization and administration of sports), and sports volunteerism involves helping and assistive behaviours (helping sports organizers, active and passive sports participants, etc).

Individuals, groups and society benefit from sports volunteerism. Volunteering in a sport setting can be considered as potential leisure activity because sport volunteering provides volunteers with opportunities to enjoy and watch sport through experiences in the subculture of sport organizations and to get along with other people (Cuskelly, 1995; Doherty and Price, 2005; Green and Chalip, 1998). Volunteering helps individuals in the development of relationships with others of different backgrounds, cultures, and traditions. Individual volunteers benefit from other sports volunteers as they share ideas, skills, knowledge and experiences (Pi, 2001). Social relationship and bond are established by and among sports volunteers. There is cultural transfusion among the volunteers as they come from different cultural backgrounds. Volunteers are extremely important resource, not only because they assist with events but also because they greatly reduce the costs of running events (Monga, 2006). It could be seen that the finance which would have been used in hiring and paying manpower for sports can be save for sports organizers through the services of volunteers.

### **Meaning of Volunteer, Volunteering and Sports Volunteerism**

A volunteer is someone who willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organization or group (Australian Bureau Statistics, 2001). However, they further noted that the reimbursement of expenses or the provision of small gifts did not preclude people receiving such benefits from being considered as volunteers. A volunteer is a person or association that provides voluntary services to a person or social system with no expectation of financial reward.

Volunteering as people exercising their own free will, for no remuneration at all, in a formal setting to help others (Paull, 1999). Volunteering is a type of 'serious leisure', the characteristics of which include a need to persevere with the activity, the tendency to have a career in it, durable benefits, unique culture and participant identification (Parker, 1992). Volunteering is activity done without expectation of monetary reward (Noble, 1991). Volunteering as a formalized activity in which individual time and efforts are given freely without any remuneration for the benefit of other persons, groups, or organizations (Gratton, et al., 1997). Volunteering refers to any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit individuals or groups other than or in addition to, close relatives, or for the benefit of the environment (Downward and Ralston, 2005).

Sports volunteerism is a human service delivery venture. Volunteering in sport involves individual volunteers helping others in sport and receiving either no remuneration or only expenses (Taylor et al., 2003). In this paper, sports volunteerism is the act of rendering selfless and voluntary services to sports organizers for the administration and development of sports programme without anticipation of any financial reward before or at the end of the sports programme.

### **Qualities of A Good Sports Volunteer**

There are certain qualities expected from sports volunteer. A sports volunteer needs to possess reasonable level of good health and physical fitness. He or she must be cheerful and have good communication ability and skill. He or she must love and have interest in sports and must understand the terrain and geographical location of where the sports event is to take place. He or she must be a person with integrity, highly friendly, and possess the ability to work in and with groups. He or she must be of good moral conduct and a reasonable level of commitment. A sports volunteer should be flexible and possess practical problem-solving and leadership skills. He or she should have the ability to adapt to different socio-cultural settings.

### **Roles of Sports Volunteers**

Experts in sports and other sports-related fields can serve as volunteers to ensure smooth, safe, effective and efficient administration and development of sports programmes. There are different roles

and functions which an individual or groups can offer their volunteer services before, during and after a sporting event. Sport volunteers fulfill diverse roles in community-based sport including coaching, training, officiating, administration, and general helping-out (Williams, et al., 1995). They further noted that sport volunteers also help with the operation of sporting competition. Volunteers participate in specific duties such as food service, hospitality, customer service, and administration (Downward and Ralston, 2005). The roles such as media, marketing, crowd control, venue management, first aid provision, registration, and volunteer supervision and management can be filled by volunteers at sporting events (Cuskelly, et al., 2006). Sports volunteers assist in the planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling, and reporting of sports events and ensuring the welfare and safety of sports participants.

### **Utilizing Sports Volunteerism for Grassroot Sports Development in Nigeria**

The strength and future of sports in any nation depend substantially on its grassroot sports developmental plans, strategies and programmes. There are many avenues for sports volunteers to contribute to sports development in Nigeria. Nigerian ex-internationals can engage in volunteer work by ensuring sports development at the grassroot. At the grassroot level, sports professionals or experts such coaches can volunteer to organize novice athletes or players and coach them without expecting any financial reward. In the context of this paper, grassroot sports are recreational or competitive sports events or programmes organized at the villages, local communities or local governments for its members or inhabitants. Serving and retired coaches and athletes especially elite athletes can volunteer their time, skills, and resources to form sports clubs that will serve as springboards for youths in the community thereby ensuring grassroot sports development.

Sports experts and elite athletes with good educational background can establish sports academy as part of volunteer service. The former footballer, Chief Segun Odegbani inaugurated multi-sports senior secondary school, an international sports academy in Wasimi Ogun State. The aim of the academy is to take sports to the grassroot where youths can combine sports and other academic work (Salami, 2009). Youths can register and attend such sports academy to develop and improve on their sports skills. Sports talents can be identified and nurtured in sports academy for the interest of sports development in Nigeria.

Provision of sports equipment, supplies and construction of sports facilities can be part of sports volunteering services by individuals or organizations. Retired coaches and elite athletes with good educational qualification can serve as instructors at sport institutes as volunteers. In the spirit of sports volunteerism, sports professionals especially academicians can develop sports by organizing conferences, workshops, seminars and symposia on sports issues and problems. Sports issues discussed by these professional if implemented in no doubt will contribute to sports development. Solutions to problems facing sports can be proffered with the volunteer services of sports professionals. Health practitioners can volunteer and give free medical attention to sports participants who sustain injuries in their course of participating in sports. Mass media can volunteer to give a wide coverage of sports events as part of volunteer services.

### **Financial Reward as an Emerging Issue among Unemployed Youth Volunteers at The 17th National Sports Festival In Nigeria**

National sports festival is a sports competition that takes place every two years among all the states in Nigeria in different sporting activities. The states field their athletes to compete against athletes from other states of the federation. Most experts had 'no financial reward' as an element of volunteerism including sports volunteerism (Henderson, 1985; Smith, 1994; Monga, 2006). However, reimbursement of expenses or the provision of small gifts did not preclude people receiving such benefits from being considered as volunteers (Australian Bureau Statistics, 2001; Taylor, et al., 2003). Sports volunteers at the 17th National Sports Festival otherwise known as "Garden City Games" held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State of Nigeria are mostly people with no jobs, low income or economic status who expect financial reward for services rendered before, during and after sports events.

Most of the unemployed youths comprising graduates and non-graduates are looking forward to what and where to invest their time with the hope of getting financial reward. They see competitive sport events such as National Sports Festival as an avenue to participate as volunteers and have share in the financial budget of the festival. Unfortunately, the unemployed youth volunteers do not believed in the "no financial reward" element of volunteerism. They believed that any service rendered is expected to be rewarded financially. For instance, before the end of the Sports Festival, sports volunteers used for the event were working with high hope and expectation of financial rewards. During the Sports Festival, the sports volunteers often ask questions such as how much are the sports organizers going to pay them, when will they pay them, and through who are they going to pay them?

### **Some Challenges Faced By Sports Volunteers during 17th National Sports Festival**

Some of the challenges faced by sports volunteers in the discharge of their responsibilities include poor identification of sports volunteers, poor rapport and communication between sports volunteers and other sports participants, lack of communication equipment, and poor knowledge and understanding of the terrain of sports venues and road networks.

#### **Poor Identification of Sports Volunteers**

The sports volunteers were not properly identified with identity tags or cards for easy recognition during the competition. Identification tags or cards provided for other sports organizers were not made available to the volunteers. This made it a little difficult for them to have access to some venues of the competition without much interrogation. The sports volunteers were left with much introduction of themselves to other sports participants especially some members of the local organizing team for recognition and acceptance.

#### **Poor Rapport and Communication between Sports Volunteers and Other Sports Participants**

The sports volunteers were not mostly well integrated in the programme of each day sports events. This resulted to a gap in the relationship between sports volunteers and sports organizers in the day-to-day running of the competition and what they are to do. The volunteers do not know much about the programme of sports events. Some of the States directors of sports did not rapport well with the sports volunteers who were assigned to their teams. They felt there was no need for the sports volunteers and as such there services were not needed.

#### **Lack of Communication Equipment**

The sports volunteers were not well equipped with necessary equipment. The non-provision of centralized communication gadgets to the sports volunteers by the sports organizers to enable them communicate effectively with sports organizers hindered their efficiency and effectiveness. Adequate provisions and arrangements were made for the communication gadgets of State directors of sports and members of local organizing team without provisions for sports volunteers who stood as intermediary between sports organizers and sports teams during the festival. The needs of the teams or athletes were expected to be made known to the sports organizers through the sports volunteers and the needs met by the sports organizers through the sports volunteers.

#### **Poor Knowledge and Understanding of the Terrain Sports Venues and Road Networks**

The Sports Festival took place at different geographical locations in the State. Most sports volunteers did not have a good knowledge and understanding of the terrain of the venues mapped out for the sports competitions. There was late arrival of some teams to the competition venue. Some athletes or teams missed their matches even with the accompaniment of a sports volunteer who did not understand or know the terrain and road networks to the competition venues.

## CONCLUSION

Volunteerism is a global social phenomenon that involves voluntary service-delivery without financial reward. Volunteers have been associated with effective and efficient administration and development of sports competitions at local, national and international levels. Sports volunteers render essential services and contribute to the success of sports competitions. The areas which volunteers can help in sports administration and development include coaching athletes, training and retraining of sports personnel, officiating sports competitions, ensuring the health, safety and welfare of sports participants, among others. Most sports volunteers in Nigeria are unemployed youths who anticipate financial reward even when they are informed that volunteerism is not associated with any financial reward.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to ensure efficient service delivery of sports volunteers in subsequent competitions, the following recommendations were made.

1. Proper identification tags or cards should be provided for the sports volunteers.
2. Necessary communication equipment should be provided for the sports volunteers during competitions to assist them in service delivery and maintaining contact with sports organizers.
3. Sports volunteers with good knowledge and understanding of the terrain of sports venues and road networks should be used for competitions.
4. The sports volunteers should be well integrated into sports programme by the sports organizers for them to have a sense of belonging. The state hosting the competition should ensure good rapport between sports volunteers, state directors of sports and other sports participants.
5. The youths especially unemployed youths should be well informed and educated on the concept of sports volunteerism. This will help to avert some questions and misunderstanding between the sports organizers and volunteers on the issue of financial reward for services rendered during or after the competitions.
6. Sports volunteers clubs, centres, agencies and foundations should be established by sports enthusiasts at the local government, state and national levels with coordinators to create awareness of the need for volunteerism in sports.

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