

Sports

The Problem

Nigeria's excellent potentials in sports are well documented. The country is well endowed with sporting talents, as evidenced by the adequate representation of the country in international professional sporting tournaments. This is even more pronounced in football, the sport that captivates the minds of all, especially Nigeria's teeming youth. However, despite the excellent performance of individual Nigerians in the international sporting arena, Nigeria's fortunes in sports as a country in international competitions dropped sharply to an unacceptable level before and immediately after 2010. For instance, in 2011, Nigeria failed to qualify for the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) 2011 for the first time in 25 years. In addition, Nigeria performed woefully in the 2012 Olympics. Consequently, following the country's disappointing performance at the Summer Olympics in 2012, the Jonathan administration embarked on reform of the sports sector beginning with the organisation of a presidential retreat.

Reform Actions

The central plank of the Jonathan administration's sport policy is to support Nigeria's sports men and women with better sports governance, finance, and training facilities for Nigeria to excel in international and domestic competitions. In line with this, a number of reform initiatives were undertaken and these include:

Presidential Retreat on Sports: The main objectives of the presidential retreat were to:

1. Discuss and understand Nigeria's current sporting landscape
2. Identify the priority sports Nigeria should focus on over the short- to medium-term
3. Understand the critical barriers for priority sports to achieve Nigeria's full potential
4. Develop concrete plans for both grassroots and elite sports towards achieving success at international sport events
5. Consider financing options that will enable the achievement of those plans

The retreat came up with a number of conclusions that have far-reaching implication on the management and administration of sports, funding, and institutions. The Retreat concluded as follows:

1. To deal with the management and administrative issues, the efficiency of the sports federation needs to be enhanced, in addition to creating a high performance directorate and improvement in coaching capacities.
2. To deal with the funding constraints, corporate sponsorship of sports should be improved. In addition, the increased government funding as well as using lottery to fund sports were recommended.

In order to strengthen the sports institutions and allow professionalisation of sports management and administration in Nigeria, a National Sports Commission Bill was proposed.

Since the Retreat, the following reform actions were undertaken in order to transform the sports sector:

1. *Code of Governance and Election Guidelines for National Sports Federations:* The National Sports Commission (NSC) has developed a code of governance for national sports federations and election guidelines into their boards to take effect from the May 2013 elections. The code is focused on entrenching the principles of transparency, efficiency and accountability across the federations while providing a framework that maintains an ethical culture through a committed self-regulatory approach.
2. *Traffic Light Funding: A Paradigm Shift:* The Jonathan administration has established a 'Traffic Light' funding strategy to guide the disbursement of funds across the various sports. This represents a paradigm shift, whereby government focuses on funding sporting activities, rather than funding sporting federations. It is a performance-driven, competitive, efficient, and creative approach to the application of resources. The three major areas in need of attention are prioritised according to the traffic light, as follows: RED Funds, for instance, are dedicated to promoting sporting activities at the grassroots level and to stimulate mass participation in sports, especially among school-age children through facilitation of sports clubs; AMBER Funds are available to support elite athlete development through the federations of Olympic sports; while GREEN Funds are dedicated to high performance sports development for individual athletes, coaches, and managers. This strategy, apart from enhancing resource management efficiency, guarantees grassroots sports development and participation, hence a strong sports future for Nigeria.
3. *High Performance Sports Directorate:* Under the NSC, the government has created the Nigeria High Performance Sports Directorate (HPSD) that is charged with the responsibility of developing and managing an elite athletes programme for Nigeria's participation in international competitions, especially the Olympics and Paralympics.
4. *Sports Development Fund:* This is a framework for sustainable private sector driven sports development that explores opportunities in lottery and additional tax on some luxury goods such as tobacco and alcohol.
5. *Reform of the National Sports Festival:* In 1973, the National Sports Festival (NSF) was meant to be the biggest sporting event in Nigeria as well as a platform for talent identification. However, the NSF no longer meets Nigeria's sports development goals and was no longer relevant as a talent identification platform. It had lost its glamour and, therefore, sponsorship attraction. It also does not accommodate Nigeria's huge reserve of Diaspora talents, and therefore needs to be reformed. The National Sports Festival has therefore been restructured into an open festival, where Nigerian elite athletes all over the world are now eligible to participate, therefore making the NSF, the Nigerian Olympics.
6. *The National Youth U-17 Games:* With the restructuring of the NSF into an open competition, it became imperative to create another platform for talent discovery. Therefore, government created National Youth U-17 Games for early discovery of budding sporting talents. The maiden edition of the Games took place in December 2013.
7. *Accelerated hearing of the NSC bill at the National Assembly:* Working with the House Committee on Sports, the Bill establishing the National Sports Commission has passed through a second reading at the House of Representatives.
8. *From Playground to Podium:* The new vision for grassroots sports development is focused on the early commencement and discovery of talents in order to produce future high performance talent. The average age of commencement is captured between age 8 and 12.
9. *Rhythm N' Play:* The National Academics Sports Committee (NASCOM) was setup as the flagship vehicle of the NSC for grassroots sports development. It has designed the

Rhythm N' Play brand to drive and revolutionise grassroots sports in Nigeria. Rhythm N' Play is an exciting youth-friendly campaign aimed at enhancing mass youth participation in sporting activities and competitions. It uses music, creativity, celebrities, volunteers, new media, and other elements of pop culture to amplify and realise its objectives. Mr President launched the campaign on 6 June 2013. It focuses on six sport categories: football, athletics, martial arts, racket sports, ball games, and calisthenics. Six championships have been created for each of the focus sports. These championships have been designed as youth-friendly brands to attract private sector sponsorship. Already, Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) has adopted Super Smash Nigeria School Cup - the racket sports brand of Rhythm N' Play.

10. **A New League Management Company:** In order to revive the Nigeria football league, a new company was incorporated on 6 March 2013 to manage the league under licence from the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) for an initial period of 99 years. The Nigeria Football Federation and the Premier League Clubs are the shareholders of this company. In time, the general public would be able to buy shares in the company.
11. **Reforming the National Institute for Sport (NIS):** The National Institute for Sport (NIS) was set up in 1972 to drive manpower development in sports. While it has remained focused on this mandate over the years, the NIS needs to be repositioned to drive the development of sports science and high performance sports in Nigeria. In 2012, the government set up a visitation panel to review the programmes of the NIS and develop a framework for its reform in line with global standards.
12. **National Stadia Facilities:** Out of the five national stadia in Abuja, Lagos, Bauchi, Kaduna, and Ibadan, the federal government has transferred the ownership of three to their respective state governments. Federal government now only concentrates on the stadia facilities in Lagos and Abuja. The long-term plan for both Abuja and Lagos is to concession the stadia to private managers thereby relieving government of the responsibility for maintenance and to also generate revenue.

Main Achievements

The main achievement in sports has been better performance at competitions as demonstrated by the following successes recorded since after the presidential retreat:

1. Super Eagles won 2013 Africa Cup of Nations after 19 years.
2. Super Eagles came third in the 2014 Championship of African Nations.
3. Nigeria qualified for the 2104 World Cup tournament in Brazil and reached the last 16 of the tournament.
4. The Golden Eaglets won the FIFA Under 17 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates in 2013.
5. The Golden Eaglets finished second at the U-17 African Championship in Morocco in 2013, thereby qualifying for the FIFA 2013 U-17 World Cup for the 10th time.
6. The Flying Eagles finished third at U-20 African Championship in Algeria in 2013 and qualified for the 2013 FIFA U-20 World Cup.
7. Nigeria placed first at the 2012 Senior African Athletics Championship in Port Novo and emerged overall winner with 10 gold, six silver, and five bronze medals.
8. At the London 2012 Paralympic Games, Nigeria put up a stellar performance clinching six gold medals, five silvers and one bronze medal. Nigeria also set

three world records in power lifting representing its second best performance ever in the history of the Paralympic games.

9. Nigeria won a gold and silver medal at the 2012 World Chess Olympiad in Turkey.
10. Nigeria was Overall Winner at the 2012 Senior Africa Weightlifting Championships in Kenya.
11. Nigeria emerged first at the Senior African Athletics Championship in Port Novo and the overall winner with 10 gold, six silver and five bronze medals in 2013.
12. Nigeria won the African junior Athletics Championship in 2013.

Key Challenges

1. Overbearing influence of government officials, e.g. dictating to professional coaches.
2. Limited collaboration between the sports ministry and the education sector.
3. Non-passage of the NSC Bill, which is still pending with the National Assembly.
4. Low level of scientific development of sports.
5. Politicisation of sporting facilities.
6. Low private sector interest in funding sports.
7. Sports facilities provided by the government are not properly maintained

Assessment of Reform Initiative

Assessed against the 10 criteria for assessing the reforms, the Sports sector recorded significant achievements.

S/No	Assessment Criteria	Result of Assessment
1	Have the reforms improved the quality and quantity of the public service delivered?	The sports reforms have significantly improved the quantity and quality of service delivery, especially in football.
2	Do more people now have access to services, including disadvantaged groups such as women, young persons, and people with disabilities?	The reforms have improved access to sports, including the disadvantaged, as demonstrated by the success of Nigeria in the London 2012 Paralympic Games.
3	Have the reforms reduced the cost of governance?	The reforms have the potential to reduce the cost of service delivery, especially with the increased use of PPP and sponsorship in the sector.
4	Have the reforms made the service more affordable for citizens?	The cost of watching sports has largely stayed the same for citizens.

S/No	Assessment Criteria	Result of Assessment
5	Have the reforms reduced corruption?	Allegations of match fixing seems to have reduced.
6	Have the reforms reduced unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape?	The reforms have the potential of reducing bureaucracy and red tape in the sector, especially with the transfer of stadia facilities to states and as more PPP are used to manage the remaining facilities.
7	Are the reform initiatives likely to lead to improved development outcomes?	Improved sporting activities are likely to lead to better development outcome as sports improve health conditions.
8	Are things improving, staying the same, or getting worse?	Things are improving in the sports sector.
9	Where things are improving, will those improvements endure?	The increased involvement of the private sector can potentially ensure the sustainability of the reforms.
10	Where things are not improving, what should be done?	Not Applicable.

Proposed Next Steps

1. Collaboration between the sports ministry and the education sector should be improved, so that the latter would provide the incubation ground for the former.
2. Efforts should be stepped up to pass the NSC Bill.
3. The application of science in sports should be increased.

More innovative ways of encouraging the private sector funding of sporting activities should be devised, as is the practice internationally. This will ensure facilities are maintained and run efficiently