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BHUTAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE



**Concept note for the Formulation of a National Sports Policy
Proposed by: Bhutan Olympic Committee**

Background

The Bhutan Olympic Committee (BOC) formed in November 1983, succeeded the National Sports Association of Bhutan that was established in 1972. The BOC, the 15 National Sports Federations (NSFs), 2 Sports Associations and the 10 recently established Dzongkhag Sports Associations (DSAs) affiliated to the BOC, are responsible for the development of sports in the country.

The primary and fundamental role of the BOC is to promote the spirit of Olympism and the Olympic values in the country and facilitate the representation of Team Bhutan in all International, Continental, and Regional Games. However, in the absence of any other body overseeing the development of sports in the country, the BOC has also been tasked, by default, with the mandate of being the apex body for the overall development of sports in the country.

Rationale for proposing a new policy

The high proportion of youth population, increasing rural-to-urban migration, increasing urbanization and associated lifestyle-related problems, are part of the development process and cannot be stopped. However, if not mitigated, such problems can have serious repercussions on society's health, value systems, living environment and the economy.

Sports and games directly or indirectly impact the lives of all citizens, irrespective of age or gender, and have significant potential to contribute to the national economy, culture, good governance, international relations, community spirit, overall health of population and juvenile delinquency, among others.

In light of the overwhelming evidence on the benefits of sports, there is a compelling need for a focused and coherent Policy governing the development of sports in Bhutan, that will strategically intervene to alleviate the above concerns. The benefits from sports far outweigh the costs for its organized development, and hence, it is imperative for all stakeholders to come together and formulate a cohesive Policy document that will cater to the promotion and development of sports, if Bhutan is to ever realize the full potential of organized sports.



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Situational analysis

Endogenous issues and challenges

Most sport bodies in the country operate individually with no functional and formal linkage with each other or with other stakeholders and communities. They do not have clear and coherent organizational visions, missions, mandates and strategic road maps and their plans and programs are largely limited to organizing sporting events. Most, if not all sport bodies, lack appropriate functional organizational structures to guide their work and implement their programs and activities.

The BOC and most of the NSFs do not have their own service and human resources management rules and regulations, procurement and financial management norms. There are no recognized protocols for the development and endorsement of the constitutions of existing NSFs. Where they do exist, they are seldom implemented. As per the norms of the Olympic Charter and that of the international federations, national sport bodies must have territorial representation to be recognized as NSFs. However, as of now, most of the existing NSFs do not meet this basic requirement.

There is a severe lack of human resource capacity, in terms of quantity and quality, in the sport sector. Most NSFs are managed by executive committees, mainly comprising of volunteers who lack any accountability for their performance. Attracting appropriate talent and skills to enable professional excellence in sports is a major challenge due to lack of career advancement and employment opportunities, as well as poor coaching and skill development programs.

Exogenous Issues and Challenges

While substantial sports infrastructure facilities do exist in the country, approximately 80% of all facilities are owned by schools and institutions (BSBS, 2010) and are either poorly maintained or are less accessible to local communities.

The total fund earmarked for sport during the 10th FYP was 0.18% of the total 10th FYP budget (amounting to US\$ 1.15 million per annum), which is one of the lowest in the world. In contrast, Cuba spends 13% of their national budget (US\$ 120 million per annum) and India spent 0.5% (US\$ 185.1 million) for sport in 2006-07.

The BOC must proactively mobilize and raise investment levels in the sports sector from present levels of state support, in the interest of larger strategic benefits to the nation. Opportunities for fundraising and ensuring the financial sustainability of the sports sector must be explored, both nationally and internationally.



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In summary, the absence of proper governance and administrative systems, inappropriate organizational arrangements, lack of a nationally representative sports base and sporting culture, mediocre human resources, inadequate funds, and poorly maintained infrastructure, are the main factors impeding the development of organized sports in the country.

What will the policy entail?

Recognizing the social, health and economic benefits of sports, there is a clear and present need for a Policy to increase and enhance lifelong participation in sports.

The policy will seek to:

- Encourage excellence in the management of our sporting organizations by promoting efficiency and better outcomes, including a better coordinated and integrated approach to the management of both high performance sport and grass roots participation.
- Provide all Bhutanese with access to a comprehensive range of quality sports participation opportunities to enable them to fulfill their potential and realize the physical, social, mental and spiritual benefits regardless of socio-economic status, age, gender, ability and geographic location.
- Ensure that resources are provided to increase the international sporting success achieved by Bhutanese athletes through an integrated national sports delivery system.
- Clearly identify and communicate the roles and responsibilities and expectations of the National Sport Federations, Sports Associations, Department of Youth and Sports, Sports Clubs and other relevant agencies in promotion of sport in Bhutan.
- Include sports as an integral part of holistic and quality education with mandatory physical education and participation in sports as a necessary pre-requisite to foster education, health and personality development.
- Build organized local bodies for sports through clubs and associations, for improved coordination and administration of sports activities in every locality.
- Facilitate in creating favorable environment for urban dwellers to practice healthy lifestyles by engaging in physical activities.



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- Frame strategies to encourage communities to take ownership of local sports bodies and ensure financial sustainability through revenue generating mechanisms.
- Outline resource allocation modalities and frame strategies for resource mobilization.
- Formulate mechanisms for effective and efficient reporting and monitoring.
- Ensure adequate number of people are trained, assessed and upgraded to implement sports activities both at the grassroots and elite level.
- Focus on improving the participation of women in sports, improving delivery of indigenous sport and promote sports for the physically and intellectually impaired.
- Outline clear pathways to deliver sport by minimizing duplication of resources and maximize the benefits and effectiveness of available resources.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of sports fund by committing to science and technology and sharpening and reshaping existing structures and redefining the relationship between the stakeholders to better focus all investments made in the development of sports.

Contribution toward the national philosophy of Gross National Happiness

Sports can function as the perfect medium to shape each individual into an ideal ‘*citizen*’, and provides avenues through which all individual can develop their full potential, and in doing so enable individuals to contribute to the development of the nation. Sports programs should promote physical activity, teach skills as well as form or change behaviour, and should be able to influence health and well being for the youth. Giving youth the opportunity to be active early in their lives will provide an important foundation for lifetime physical activity and can assist with the development of interpersonal relationships, personal growth and self-esteem. Well structured sports program can develop sportsmanship, cooperation, teamwork, giving and receiving support, appreciation for regular exercise, emotional control, leadership and fellowship. Sport offers the community opportunities to build a strong identity and culture of excellence. Traditional values of respect, fairness, responsibility and resilience are developed as part of youth participation and help develop abilities and foster aspirations for interesting and rewarding lives.

All of the above, directly or indirectly contribute to the attainment of Gross National Happiness.



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In addition, the following are the broad benefits from having a vibrant sporting culture in the community:

- i. Good governance
 - Excellence in the management of Bhutan's sporting organisations by promoting efficiency and better outcomes, including a better coordinated and more integrated approach to the management of both high performance sport and grass roots participation
 - Institute democratic governance practices in sports as per the norms of the International Olympic committee
- ii. Health benefit
 - Strong evidence exists to support the assertion that sports contribute to the overall health of an individual. Continuous improvement in the delivery of sports participation opportunities in supportive environment will enhance the quality of life.
 - Physically active people are more likely to eat a healthy diet thereby reducing cardiovascular disease risk factors
- iii. Social benefit
 - Sports make a unique contribution to the nation's identity and social infrastructure. The true value cannot be counted in numbers as it is an intangible asset that directly relates to the human and social wealth of the nation
 - Community benefits of participation in sports include a stronger social fabric via community development, improved community health, enhanced non-family support networks, decreased anti-social behavior and increased community self reliance and identity
 - The sports and recreation infrastructure and events at the community level often serve as a model for community-initiated program that have a strong reliance on volunteer support
- iv. Economic benefit
 - The sport industry today is a wide reaching business that spans the field of play, from the food and merchandise, to media rights and sponsorships. The global sports industry is growing faster than the overall GDP rates around the world. And the global sports value chain, its size, make-up and revenues have significant growth prospects in future
 - Cardiovascular disease is responsible for one of the highest levels of health care costs in the country; organized sports across the nation will help improve health standards of people thereby reducing health care cost significantly. The economic gains will far outweigh the initial investments made in the development of sports
 - Adventure sports and recreational facilities and events play a major role in escalating



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- tourism industry, contributing to local and national development. Major sporting events are seen as having significant potential benefits for tourism by bringing people to the event itself, as well as providing the opportunity for visitors to spend additional time in Bhutan before or after the event
- Sports also provides greater opportunities for private sector to play a greater role in recreation, outdoor and fitness industry
- v. Employment
- With the fast growing sport industry, there are lots of opportunities to recruit, train and retain highly skilled and motivated sport leaders (such as coaches, teachers, fitness instructors and community volunteers), officials (referees and umpires) and sport administrators/managers
- vi. Culture & cross cutting outcomes
- Promotion of indigenous games and culture
 - Engage strategically with key regional and international development and sport organisations to establish regional and international commitment to development-through-sport efforts. Foreign relations and development of strategic international relation are some of the components of the good governance. The BOC being affiliated to the International sporting agencies like International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), it is mandatory for the BOC to participate in the Olympic, Continental, Asian and South Asian Games. Participation in such games is not only limited to athletes and coaches but the delegation must be led by state dignitaries. Such a platform provides a vehicle for developing international relation amongst the participation countries.
 - Sport has a unique ability to transcend race, gender and religion. Gender equality is central to economic and human development. A growing body of evidence shows that sport is a viable tool for promoting gender equality and empowering women. It can foster self-esteem and empowerment. Sport can also contribute to increasing women's voice in decision-making and leadership. It is also an entry point to women's participation at higher levels of society and in more formal systems.

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Project timeline: 6 months to 1 year (final draft)