

Sports Facilities for Unpopular Grassroot Sports: A Necessity for Peace and Sustainable Sports Development in Nigeria

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Abstract- This abstract explores the critical role of sports facilities in fostering peace and sustainable sports development in Nigeria, with a particular focus on unpopular grass root sports. While mainstream sports have traditionally dominated the nation's sporting landscape, the potential of lesser-known grass root sports in contributing to social cohesion and sustainable development cannot be underestimated. This paper argues that the provision of adequate sports facilities tailored to these unpopular sports is indispensable for unlocking their latent potential. In Nigeria, a country marked by diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, grass root sports can serve as a unifying force. By investing in facilities that cater to sports such as traditional wrestling, indigenous games, and regional athletics, policymakers can harness the power of sports to bridge societal divides and foster a sense of unity. Furthermore, the development of these facilities can act as catalysts for economic growth by generating employment opportunities and attracting investments. This paper underscores the importance of strategic planning and collaboration between government agencies, private entities, and community stakeholders in the creation and maintenance of sports facilities. Additionally, it advocates for the incorporation of educational programs and skill development initiatives within these facilities, ensuring a holistic approach to sports development. In conclusion, this paper posits that investing in sports facilities for unpopular grass root sports is not merely a sporting endeavor but a pathway to peace and sustainable development in Nigeria. By embracing the diversity of sports culture and providing the necessary infrastructure, the nation can tap into the vast potential of these lesser-known sports, fostering a harmonious society and nurturing a sustainable sports ecosystem.

Indexed Terms- Unpopular Sports, Grassroots Development, Sports Facilities, Peacebuilding, Sustainable Development

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, a nation brimming with youthful energy and a passion for sports, faces a critical challenge: the neglect of unpopular grassroots sports. While football enjoys widespread popularity and infrastructure support, other sports like handball, hockey, table tennis, and badminton struggle to gain attraction due to lack of dedicated facilities. This neglect has significant consequences, hindering not only the development of these sports but also impacting broader societal issues like peace and sustainable sports development.

Sports facilities play a pivotal role in the development of grassroots sports, particularly in the context of unpopular or lesser-known sports disciplines. In Nigeria, a country with a rich sporting heritage and a diverse cultural tapestry, the provision of adequate sports facilities for unpopular grassroots sports is not only essential for promoting physical activity and talent development but also for fostering peace, social cohesion, and sustainable sports development. This paper aims to explore the significance of sports facilities for unpopular grassroots sports in Nigeria, emphasizing their role in promoting peace and sustainable sports development, with a focus on the need for investment, infrastructure development, and community engagement. This paper argues that the provision of adequate sports facilities for unpopular grassroots sports is not merely a matter of promoting specific sporting disciplines; it is a necessity for fostering peace, social cohesion, and achieving sustainable sports development in Nigeria.

Importance of Sports Facilities for Unpopular Grass Root Sports

Talent Development and Inclusivity: Sports facilities provide the infrastructure necessary for the training and development of athletes in unpopular grassroots sports. According to Akindare (2018), the availability of well-equipped facilities, such as training grounds, gyms, and specialized courts, is crucial for nurturing talent and creating pathways for athletes in lesser-known sports disciplines. A study by Akintola & Fagbemi (2019) underscores the role of grassroots sports in talent identification and development. Providing dedicated facilities ensures that young talents in unpopular sports receive the necessary support and training, contributing to the overall excellence of Nigerian sports at national and international levels.

Promotion of Physical Activity and Health: Investment in sports facilities for unpopular grassroots sports contributes to promoting physical activity and a healthy lifestyle among individuals who may not be inclined towards mainstream sports. As noted by Onyeama (2019), access to sports facilities encourages participation in physical activities, thereby addressing public health challenges and promoting overall well-being within communities. The United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP, 2023) underscores the positive impact of sports on physical and mental well-being. Encouraging participation in grass root sports through dedicated facilities promotes a healthier lifestyle at the grassroots level, contributing to the overall well-being of individuals and communities.

Social Cohesion and Peacebuilding: Sports, including unpopular grassroots sports, have the potential to serve as a platform for social integration, cultural exchange, and conflict resolution. Sports facilities act as meeting points for diverse communities, fostering interaction and mutual understanding. This aligns with the assertion by Ogunleye (2020) that sports facilities can be catalysts for peace and social cohesion, particularly in regions with historical or ongoing tensions. According to Yelamos, Carty & Clardy (2019), sports play a pivotal role in fostering social cohesion, particularly in diverse societies. Unpopular grass root sports, deeply rooted in local traditions and cultural

practices, serve as important elements of cultural identity. By providing facilities for these sports, Nigeria can promote inclusivity and unity among its diverse population, as highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015).

The Roles of Sport Facilities For Sustainable Sports Development

Sport facilities are resources of production of sports and recreational programmes which includes all spaces, building, supplies and equipment with sports recreation (Srententa and Ana 2013). Singer, (2021) states that, the roles of sport facilities for sustainable development in any nation cannot be over emphasized. He further states that Sport facilities are major considerations for and determinants of sports development globally. The presence of sports facilities provides standard settings for fitness, recreation and competition. Sport facilities determine to a considerable extent the type of sport programme that can be organized in a nation. When standard sport facilities are provided, sporting activities will improve greatly. Orumaboka (2007) as cited by Singer (2021) stipulated that when sport facilities are provided, people are encouraged to participate actively in sports competitions or recreation without hindrances. He further stated that, to succeed in sporting activities the quantity and quality of the available sports facilities must be of great concern when planning the construction of the facility. This will help to enhance the training and acquisition of skills. Ofili (2009) also opined that the provision of sports facilities enhance mass participation in sports which would precipitate sports developments. The provision of sports facilities in the society will enable youths to be actively involved in sports participation which will instill discipline in them since it embodies rules and regulation, spirit of teamwork, indirect training regiment, fair play and acceptance of defeat (Singer, 2019).

Concept of Unpopular Sports

Unpopular sport are sport that are going into extraction especially at the grassroots due mainly to the absence of sport facilities in order word they are sport being neglected anytime there are sport competition which make them to be unpopular. Organizing unpopular sport competition would foster sport development at

the grassroots. In organizing unpopular sport competition at the grassroots required the present of standard sports facilities which will motivate the youth in participating. It has become a source of worry that many sports has become unpopular while some others are popular and gain continued attention and funding, gaining more followership, consumers and widely accepted while the unpopular sports have either faded away gradually or become extinct. Martin and Sacha (2016), explained that the concept “unpopular” can be measured in different ways such as, ‘when a product(sports product) does not sell well and becomes a commercial failure’ ‘when the critics of the product(sports product) ignore the product or do not value the product’ ‘when the number of persons that know about the product is insufficient’. Millington & Darnell (2020) espoused that a sport will become unpopular when it is been neglected. It is important to intimate that some of the sports at the grassroots were not given the needed attention in term of provision of standard sports facilities and funding thus making them gradually fading away or becoming unpopular in the society. it would become imperative to conducive environment for, ensuring adequate budgetary allocations for sports as well as organizing and funding of research in sports will make the unpopular sports to be popular. An entertainment session of 20 minutes of demonstrating any of such unpopular sports prior to the commencement of major sports competitions would do well in re-awakening consciousness of such unpopular sport especially at the grassroots. Expanding the scope of sports usually competed for to include some of these unpopular sports would help to create awareness and also foster developing them at the grassroots.

Sport development is the upliftment and sustenance of the standard of the sport in Nigeria in terms of organization and administration of sport programme and practice in the relation to set objectives, vertically and horizontally, cleaning the systematic availability and maintenances of sport infrastructure and equipment enhancing the number of athletes at all level participating In sport under the guidance of cognately competent sport personnel organization of capacity building workshops and programmed aimed at building athletes performances skill and personal competences, welfare of services provided in the sport domain including athletes and personal, healthcare and

counseling services for all sport operation sponsorship of research and development programme (Hansan 2021). He further stated that, sports development is the pursuit of attainment of world class athletes performances vertically and horizontally building structure and systems in social organization to drive sport development efforts monitoring and evaluation of programme practices institutions and systems operating in the sports sectors documentation of sport data and information in all ramifications and lastly education and training of sport personal, which will lead to the attainment of predetermined and prescribed locally, nationally and internationally for a given society or nation.

Challenges and Opportunities of Organazing Unpopular Sports in Nigeria

1. Infrastructure Deficiency: Nigeria faces a lack of specialized infrastructure for unpopular grassroots sports, hindering the growth and visibility of these sports. Nigeria faces challenges related to the inadequacy of sports facilities, particularly for unpopular grassroots sports. The lack of specialized infrastructure hinders the development and visibility of these sports. This is in line with the findings of a report by the U.S. Sports Academy. (2015), which highlights the need for targeted investment in sports infrastructure to address this deficiency. Sustaining sport facilities over time requires ongoing maintenance, upgrades, and adherence to sustainable operational practices. The longevity and efficient use of sport infrastructure present challenges in resource management and environmental responsibility.

2. Community Engagement and Sustainability: Sustainable sports development requires community involvement and ownership of sports facilities. Engaging local communities in the planning, construction, and maintenance of sports facilities for unpopular grassroots sports is critical for ensuring their long-term viability and impact. This is supported by the work of Hassan (2021), who emphasizes the importance of community-driven sports development initiatives for lasting impact. Engaging the local community in the planning, development, and ongoing use of sport facilities is crucial for sustainable sports development. Building community ownership and

support for these facilities can be challenging but is essential for long-term success.

3. Funding Limitations: The future of sports infrastructure in Nigeria faces risks due to potential declines in oil production, highlighting the financial vulnerability of sports development initiatives. Building and maintaining sustainable sport facilities can be costly, posing financial challenges for communities, organizations, and governments. Securing funding for sustainable infrastructure and ongoing operational costs represents a significant hurdle.

4. Equitable Access and Inclusivity: Ensuring equitable access to sport facilities for all members of the community, including marginalized groups, individuals with disabilities, and underprivileged populations, remains a challenge. Addressing barriers to participation and promoting inclusivity is essential for sustainable sports development.

5. Environmental Impact: Despite efforts to build green sports facilities, the environmental impact of large-scale sporting events and the ongoing operation of facilities can be significant. Balancing the environmental footprint of sports facilities with the benefits they provide is a complex challenge.

6. Adaptive Reuse and Flexibility: Designing sport facilities with adaptability and flexibility in mind to accommodate changing community needs and sporting trends can be challenging. Ensuring that these facilities remain relevant and sustainable over time requires careful planning and design considerations.

CONCLUSION

The establishment and enhancement of sports facilities for unpopular grassroots sports in Nigeria emerge as a vital imperative for fostering peace and sustainable sports development in the nation. The intrinsic value of such facilities extends beyond the realm of physical activity, delving into the realms of community building, social cohesion, and holistic development. The provision of sports facilities for unpopular grassroots sports is not only a necessity for talent development and physical activity promotion but also

a crucial factor in fostering peace and sustainable sports development in Nigeria. Addressing the challenges related to infrastructure deficiency and promoting community engagement presents an opportunity to leverage sports as a unifying force and a driver of positive social change. Investing in these facilities aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), highlighting the broader societal benefits of sports infrastructure development.

By investing in sports facilities that cater to less mainstream or popular sports at the grassroots level, Nigeria can unlock a myriad of benefits. These facilities serve as breeding grounds for talent, allowing individuals with a passion for less mainstream sports to hone their skills and contribute meaningfully to the sporting landscape. The inclusivity promoted by these facilities can bridge societal gaps, fostering unity and understanding among diverse communities. Moreover, the positive impact of sports on peacebuilding cannot be overstated. Grassroots sports facilities provide a platform for individuals from different backgrounds to come together, share common goals, and build relationships that transcend societal divisions. In a nation as diverse as Nigeria, this becomes particularly crucial, contributing to the development of a more harmonious and united society.

Sustainable sports development hinges on the availability of infrastructure that supports a wide array of sports, not just those in the mainstream spotlight. Recognizing and investing in unpopular grassroots sports facilities is a strategic move towards creating a robust and diversified sporting ecosystem. It ensures that talents are nurtured across various disciplines, fostering a rich tapestry of athletic achievements that mirror the nation's diverse cultural heritage. In essence, the establishment of sports facilities for unpopular grassroots sports is not just a matter of promoting physical activity; it is a visionary step towards building a more peaceful, integrated, and sustainable future for Nigeria. As the nation continues to navigate the challenges of the contemporary sports landscape, prioritizing and investing in these facilities will undoubtedly contribute to the holistic development of both individuals and communities,

leaving an indelible mark on the nation's sporting legacy

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria can create an environment conducive to the growth of unpopular grassroots sports, fostering peace, unity, and sustainable sports development across the nation. By implementing the following recommendations,

1. Allocate funds for the construction and enhancement of sports facilities dedicated to unpopular grassroots sports. Collaborate with both public and private sectors to ensure sustainable investment and long-term infrastructure development.
2. Implement community engagement initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of unpopular grassroots sports. Organize workshops, seminars, and interactive sessions to involve local communities in the planning and development of sports facilities, fostering a sense of ownership.
3. Formulate inclusive sports policies that prioritize the development of facilities for unpopular sports at the grassroots level. Ensure that these policies address the diverse needs of different communities and promote equal opportunities for participation.
4. Establish talent identification programs to identify promising athletes in unpopular grassroots sports. Develop structured training programs, coaching clinics, and mentorship opportunities to nurture and enhance the skills of emerging talents.
5. Foster collaborations between government bodies, non-governmental organizations, and private entities to create a synergy in sports facility development. Leverage the strengths of each sector to maximize resources and efficiently address the needs of unpopular grassroots sports.

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