

Tourism through National Sporting Events in PNG: The need to Reform its Institutional and Legislative Frameworks

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Introduction

The concept of the PNG Games was first developed and introduced by the PNG Sports Foundation in 2003. It is a bi-annual event with the mission to promote and develop national unity and provincial pride through participation in sports. It is administered by the PNG Games Host Organizing Committee and is governed by the PNG Games Charter.

In the past eight years, athletics has been kept alive by a small group of people with very little support.¹ Such organizations as the National Gaming Control Board, the PNG Sports Foundation and other sponsors were very supportive of the PNG athletes during the national championships held in Lae in 2010 and 2011. Papua New Guinea has also participated in championships held abroad such as the World Junior Championships, World Youth Championships, Oceania Championship, Oceania Regionals, the Asian Grand Prix, Gold Coast Marathon, Arafura Games and the London Olympic Games.² In addition, the 2015 Pacific Games staged in PNG which saw the government allocate a total funding of K1.2billion towards upgrading of sports infrastructure. The aim of the government is to leverage sporting events and activities into the future by providing direct and indirect benefits to the country.³ However, much collaborative dialogue between relevant key stakeholders is still required if the government wants to see tourism as a key economic sector.

This paper will discuss the social and economic benefits of the PNG Games and explore a new strategy called 'sport tourism' given the focus of the government on improving sports infrastructure. The Vision 2050 includes tourism as one of the key economic sectors. Therefore, the National Tourism Master Plan 2007-2017 pointed out that inter-agency corporation and coordination is the cornerstone for growth of the tourism industry.⁴ The full potential of tourism will not be realized unless the issues of safety and security⁵ are addressed by all stakeholders. In this case, sports have so far counteracted social issues and promoted tourism. This can be strengthened through the regulatory and legislative frameworks that will cement the partnership to bring the phenomenal results for both the tourism industry and the Sports Foundation in PNG.

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¹ Tony Green, Athletics PNG Annual Report, December 2011.

² Ibid.

³ Medium Term Development Plan II.

⁴ PNG Tourism Investment Guide.

⁵ Simboy, East Boroko, "Rising kina threatens tourism", Post-Courier, Tuesday, 28 August, 2012.

Impacts of National mega-events through sports: its social and economic benefits

The PNG Games

The first PNG Games was held in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province in 2003. The second PNG Games was held in Port Moresby in the National Capital District in 2005 and the third was held in Lae, Morobe Province in 2007. The fourth PNG Games was held again in Port Moresby in 2009 and the fifth was held in Kokopo, East New Britain Province in 2012.

The sixth PNG Games was held in Lae in 2014 and the seventh was held in Kimbe, West New Britain Province in 2017. In between these two games, PNG hosted the South Pacific Games in Port Moresby in 2015.

The sixth PNG Games in Lae, saw the largest turnout of provinces as all 22 provinces were represented at the Games. A total of 10,000 athletes and officials attended the event covering 28 sporting codes. At the last PNG Games in Kimbe, a total of 19 provinces were represented and participated in 24 sporting codes. At the PNG Games in Kimbe, Southern Highlands Province (SHP) won the bid to host the 8th PNG Games. Since 2017, as will be discussed below, SHP has been struggling to host the 8th PNG Games.

Social Benefits

Life is not only about profit and loss. If a government is able to assist in creating enjoyment, whether through sports, an art exhibition, or fireworks display on New Year's Eve then, within reason, it should not be done just because the economic benefits are not great. There is actually more to life than economics.⁶ Sports contributes largely to social cohesion; it encourages good health, motivates the youths and children who are active in sports. Sports also promotes healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables. Sports participation teaches teenagers how to compete in a real world.

There are competitions in schools, in the villages, in the workforce and in other areas of life. These competitions do not have to be about winning or losing as playing sports helps the people to understand how competition can work in a friendly environment.⁷ Youth sports can also help to deter or eliminate negative behavior, such as joining a gang, because competitive sports provide an outlet for expression of feelings, friendship and controlled aggression. Teens who have positive influences (and friends) feel less of a need to participate in risky behaviors.⁸

The stance taken by the national government to support sports at various levels throughout the country is a step in the right direction. National mega events such as the PNG Games are a perfect platform to promote national unity amongst many sporting talents from the 22 provinces. Athletes participating in the 6th PNG Games in Lae, were assisted to find opportunities to reach the top level of their codes such as Games Ambassador Toea Wisil. Apart from the sporting events, different planned programmes are promoted to instill oneness and patriotism in athletes to take to the international sporting arena. The Host Organizing

⁶ Greg Jericho, The Guardian - 26 July, 2013 12:21 am <https://skift.com/2013/07/26/the-economic-benefits-of-big-sporting-events-on-tourism-arent-that-beneficial/>.

⁷ What Are the Benefits of Competitive Sports for Youth? by Sarah Davis, Last Updated: Jan 11, 2014 <http://www.livestrong.com/article/134568-what-are-benefits-competitive-sports-youth/> as at August 1, 2016.

⁸ Ibid.

Committee synchronizes sports with cultural activities, integrating the games theme to harmonize and enhance provincial athletes and officials to be well prepared for future PNG Games.⁹

The PNG Games provides the best platform for the recognition of grassroots sports people. When athletes are exposed to the proper environment, they invest time and energy into their sporting code. One would be hard pressed to find anything that gives them the opportunity for holistic benefits that are provided by competitive sports.¹⁰ Friendships between different athletes and provinces can also be fostered. Moreover, through PNG Games the host province is given the opportunity to realize the importance of sports and recreation at the provincial level.

Economic Benefits of Sports Tourism

Sporting events can be seen as a secondary product of tourism as stated in the National Tourism Guide. Sport tourism is defined as travel which involves observing or participating in a sporting event.¹¹ PNG has not received many tourists other than cultural visitors. One may wonder in what ways sports and sports events can contribute to tourism and the economy. 'Sport tourism does not only result from the visiting and expenditure from tourists but also involves the development of local infrastructure such as stadiums, hotels, transportation networks, roads, telecommunication, airports and other infrastructure. Such developments provide long term benefits to communities where they have been established'.¹²

Mega sporting events provide a platform to incorporate social and cultural features of the host community or city or country into the overall tourist experience. These events are good occasions to showcase the cultural heritage of the country such as its history, historical sites, food, music, art, architecture, and overall, what makes the host unique and interesting to entice the visitors to want to return in the near future.¹³ For instance, the Eighth PNG Games which will be held in SHP will be hosted in the true spirit of grass roots sports where participating provinces will begin to enjoy the cultural flavors of Southern Highlands. SHP has a unique cultural diversity, where the province will be proud to share with other provinces.¹⁴ This is sports promoting tourism in the SHP.

The 2015 Pacific Games pushed for the development of several sporting facilities and stadiums namely: Taurama Aquatic Centre, Sir John Guise Stadium, Games Village, Rita Flynn Netball Courts, and the Sir Hubert Murray Stadium.¹⁵ Clearly, construction of these infrastructures adds value to the economy, people are employed, and money is spent. This has

⁹ Posted on October 8, 2014 by pnggames <http://www.pnggames.org.pg/png-games-nurture-athletes/> as at July 6, 2016.

¹⁰ March 8, 2014 <http://gbstpeters.com.au/2014/03/the-benefits-of-competitive-athletic-sports-participation-for-your-life/>, as at August 1, 2016.

¹¹ Saturday, 20 September, 2014 - 08:00 <http://financialtribune.com/articles/travel/913/benefits-sport-tourism>.

¹² Anand Rampersad <http://www.guardian.co.tt/sport/2015-09-07/lots-economic-benefits-can-come-sport-tourism>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Southern Highlands Province wins 2018 PNG Games in Kimbe <http://www.shp2018png-games.org/about.html>.

¹⁵ https://www.hausples.com.pg/news/Infrastructural_Developments_in_PNG_Pushing_Growth (hausples.com.pg). PNG Real Estate News, Trends & Ideas, Infrastructural Developments in PNG Pushing Growth/2015.

also led to an increase in the number of real estate businesses in Port Moresby and the other three major cities (Lae, Mt. Hagen and Kokopo) in the last 10 years. This boosts the economy of PNG. With smaller one-off events such as the PNG Games, the benefits are easier to identify, mostly they are in hotel accommodation and perhaps restaurant or takeaway sales. Some experts believe small-scale events are more beneficial to host economies, as they bear less expense.¹⁶

Funding for PNG Games

The prompt release of funds by the provincial and national governments will expedite the progress of preparations for mega sporting events. The update by the SHP PNG Games Host Organising Committee in (accordance with the Games Charter) highlights the hardship in the overall preparation of the games. The real area of concern is the availability of funds for the games. The upgrading and refurbishment of sporting facilities must be achieved within a specified time frame. In the case of SHP, the Host Organizing Committee had to work hard with limited funds to put in place the plans that will ensure that the preparations for the games is well coordinated and effectively administrated.

This is the gap that needs legislative support to strengthen it so that the government remains committed to this worthy cause in the long term. The *Organic Law on Provincial and Local-level Governments* (OLPGLLG) should provide a provision for Provincial and the Local-Level governments to fund regional sporting events such as the PNG Games. Such a provision will obligate the two levels of government to provide financial and other resources to the games. This approach will ensure that the PNG Games are successfully hosted bi-annually.

Tourism as a growth sector through sports

Tourism is declared as one of the key economic sectors including, manufacturing, agriculture, forestry and fisheries. It is envisaged that these sectors will generate in the long term, approximately 70 per cent of the GDP with the balance coming from mining, petroleum and gas ventures in the non-renewal sector.¹⁷ In order to achieve this result, sporting events must be featured as one of the key drivers of economic growth. This will require more dialogue and collaboration amongst relevant key stakeholders such as the national government and sub-national governments.

The review of the OLPGLLG conducted by Constitutional and Law Reform Commission (CLRC) in collaboration with the Department of Provincial and Local-level Government Affairs (DPLGA)¹⁸ highlighted the need for the government to support the development of growth centres. The proposal was that District Development Authorities with the support of the national and provincial governments should establish service and growth centres that will enable people to access services and do business in their own districts. Providing this enabling environment will ensure that when sporting events are held at the provincial or district level, it will attract visitors and also regional and local audience. One of the positive outcomes that arises is that the district or province then becomes a new tourism destination.

¹⁶ Note 11, *supra*.

¹⁷ Government of Papua New Guinea, *Papua New Guinea Vision 2050* (Port Moresby: 2009).

¹⁸ See generally Constitutional and Law Reform Commission, *Review of the Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local-level Governments* (Port Moresby, 2013).

According to the Tourism Investment Guide, the authors have identified a set of secondary tourism product segments such as Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions and Special Events (MICE), cruising, fishing, bird watching and flora and fauna. It is suggested that ‘sport tourism’ should be placed under a special agency and developed. This approach will allow for growth centres which will enable the people to participate meaningfully in economic development.

As per the current law on tourism development, it is defined as ‘any business or industry that is wholly or partly engaged in providing services: (a) for visitors and tourists to Papua New Guinea; or (b) for persons travelling within the country for the purpose of holidays, recreation or amusement, or both, by way of transport, hotel accommodation, tour guides, attractions, sports and entertainments’.¹⁹ The products mentioned in this definition, if developed further through collaborative effort amongst relevant key stakeholders, the key results expected under the PNG Medium Term Development Plan 2016-2017 should have been achieved. There is huge potential in the tourism sector particularly through ‘sports tourism’. The Table below shows key indicators and targets in the tourism sector.²⁰

| Indicators | Baseline | | Targets 2017 |
|---|----------|------|-----------------|
| | Value | Year | |
| Number of tourists visiting the country per year | 64,127 | 2014 | 80,000 |
| Number of business travellers visiting the country per year | 66,639 | 2014 | 85,000 |
| Number of persons employed | 20,000 | 2013 | 26,000 |
| Total tourism receipt (billion Kina) | 1.8 | 2013 | 3.0 |

The tourism industry in PNG is still underdeveloped although it has great potential for growth. One of TPA’s objectives is to coordinate policy and government agency input to support tourism development at the national and provincial levels. The legislative framework for tourism development is already available – all it needs is the political and the administrative support in order for the sector to expand and contribute more to the economy.

The need to strengthen tourism regulatory and legislative frameworks

PNG positions itself as a unique tourist destination in the world. While much is being said about other tourism products, there is no mention of sporting events as a factor that influences tourism. Sports tourism will, if given sufficient attention, enable the resource owners at district and local levels the opportunity to participate meaningfully in economic growth. Through sports new tourist destinations are being opened up which will require necessary legislative and administrative support.

Tourism related activities have significantly increased which therefore calls for a legislative review. In addition, the authority mandated to regulate and monitor these activities lacks adequate administrative support. One of the proposed legislative changes is to create regional offices of the TPA throughout the country. In order for these regional offices to function

¹⁹ Section 2, *Tourism Promotion Authority Act* 1993.

²⁰ Department of National Planning and Monitoring, *PNG Medium Term Development Plan 2016-2017* (Port Moresby: 2015) 76.

effectively, they require support from the sub-national level, particularly from political leaders at the provincial and local-level governments. The powers and functions of the sub-national governments are clearly provided for under Sections 42 and 44 of the OLPGLLG. Section 42 sets out a list of activities that provincial governments can legislate - included on that list is 'tourism'.

The OLPGLLG has given the law-making powers to the provincial governments to enact laws on tourism. In addition, Section 44 of the OLPGLLG also provides another list of activities that a local-level government can make laws on. Included on this list is a provision for 'local tourist facilities and services'. For these activities to be implemented effectively, provincial and local-level governments must urgently enact their respective tourism laws. Once the legislative environment is established, the delegated regulatory and monitory aspects of these facilities and services can be policed by the relevant local agencies with the support of the respective regional offices.

Mega events such as the PNG Games and other seasonal domestic sport competitions, national championships and local and regional sports have a huge potential for the host particularly in terms of infrastructure and revenue (generated through the number of visitors into and from within the host province). Whilst facilities and services are being constructed to provide avenues to accommodate such events, issues such as law and order, health and safety standards must not be compromised. Instead, the regulator must set certain minimum standard for the service providers who must be rewarded when this standard is met.

Conclusion

There are few events that can unite the country. Sporting events such as the recent 15th Pacific Games and PNG Games are examples of this unique opportunity. Developing a strategy by using sports events to promote tourism is fundamental to the industry's development. The Government's tourism policy has highlighted tourism industry as a key economic sector of focus for economic development. If this is so, can major sporting events such as the PNG Games and other international sporting events be included as a secondary product under the tourism sector? Being one of the key economic sectors, tourism needs the support of industry players and relevant key stakeholders and partners to strengthen its current internal structures and systems within its established regulatory and legislative frameworks. Tourism through mega-sporting events if strengthened and developed to a level that meets certain minimum standard recognized both internationally and domestically, will achieve the goals of the country contained in the Vision 2050, PNG Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030 and the Medium-Term Development Plan.

Promoting tourism through sports has the potential for growth through seasonal domestic sport competitions, national championships and local and regional sports. The increase in the number of tourist or visitor arrivals both locally, nationally and internationally in attending major sporting events will have a huge positive impact on the host financially and socially.