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## Country profile: sport policy in Uganda

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### ABSTRACT

Explicitly tracing the current sport system structure, status and policy framework, this article is set out to review and provide a broad understanding of Uganda's sports policies. It examines historical overview, government involvement, administrative setup and the wider sport policy setting including the funding mechanisms, elite sport participation and performance, legal framework, key trends, and emerging sport policy issues. The article offers an up-to-date overview of Uganda's sport policy landscape largely since it gained its independence from the colonial rulers in 1962. However much Uganda is regarded as one of the African sports powerhouses, relatively little research has been published on both its earlier and contemporary sport policies, and even less on the implementation, administration, management and performance of elite sport. It argues that the main ambitions and priorities of the Ugandan government should not only be concentrated on attaining mass sports participation, elite sport success, national identity, economic transformation and a healthy and active population but rather on striking a balance between them. The article delineates the starting point for improving sports development through reshaping Uganda's sport policy.

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In his book *'My African Journey,'* British statesman, leader, orator and writer Sir Winston Churchill named Uganda 'The Pearl Africa' (Churchill 1909). Uganda, an East African ex-British colony, is a landlocked sovereign state bordered by Kenya to the east, the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire) to the west, Sudan to the north, Rwanda to the southwest and Tanzania to the south and is strategically located in the African Great Lakes region but more specifically in 'Heart of Africa'. It has 241,038 square kilometres, thus almost the same size as the United Kingdom (Chappell 2008). Currently, it has a population of approximately 45 million, with roughly 78% of its population beneath the age of 30. This implies that Uganda at the moment has the youngest population in the whole world (United Nations Children's Education Fund 2020). Existing demographic data indicate that Kampala, the biggest city and Capital, is one of the fastest-growing cities in the African continent with a current population of approximately 2 million (53% female and 47% male), and an annual population growth rate of over 4% (Kampala Capital City Authority 2019).

Uganda's political past is not only *rich, long* and *fascinating* but also a mixture of *agony, misery* and *woe*, which elongates back much before the 1962 independence celebrations or the creation of a British protectorate in the 1890s. This history is found in the 'deeper past,' in a 'pre-colonial crucible that becomes Uganda, a zone of interconnection where the seeds of "Uganda" are sowed' (Bruce-Lockhart 2017, Reid 2017). This theory, however, contrasts sharply with Mutibwa's latest research,

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which claims that the history of 'Uganda' begins in 1894 when a protectorate was first declared on the Buganda Kingdom (Mutibwa, 2016).

Between the years 1894 and 1962, Uganda was a British Empire protectorate. In 1893, the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) gave Britain powers over powerful kingdoms in Uganda such as Buganda Kingdom (see Endnote 3). After Uganda's internal religious disputes drove it to bankruptcy, the IBEAC surrendered control of the country (Griffiths 2001). On 9 October 1962, the Republic of Uganda gained independence and Queen Elizabeth II became the president and Queen of the then independent constitutional monarchy up to 9 October 1963. On a sad note, the period that followed was dominated by violent conflicts and an 8 years-long period of military dictatorship by President Idi Amin.

However, unlike Amin's regime, President Apollo Milton Obote's Uganda in the 1960s was comparatively peaceful, allowing for some economic progress. The ethnic wars, primarily within the army led to Amin's coup d'état. The Amin regime (1971–1979) was characterised by tribal wars, tragedies, unfulfilled hopes as well as the expulsion of foreigners following allegations of subjugating Uganda's economy on their part (Siggel and Ssemogerere 2004). Consequently, Amin's personality and wrong doings, as well as the kind of scholarship that sprung up around him, tended to eclipse the 'truths' and social realities of Uganda's military autocracy. His reign of terror turned Uganda into an African pariah. Certainly, existing scholarly work emphasises the dictator's culture, personality, and psychology, ethnicity and 'tribalism', modernisation and dependency theory, and worldwide journalism on the Amin regime all seemed to contribute to the 1970s being typified as a period of tyranny (Mutibwa, 2016, Hundle 2018). Following Amin's ouster in 1979, there was a period of unrest that only ended in January 1986, when President Yoweri Katuga Tibuhaburwa Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) beat the junta that had deposed Obote and seized control (Reid 2017).

Grix, Lindsey, De Bosscher and Bloyce assert that there is still shortage of scholarly work on sport policy has a research field as been ignored by the would-be sport policy scholars such as international relations scholars and political sciences (Grix *et al.* 2018). Thus, the main purpose of this article is to review and provide a broad understanding of Uganda's sports policies. Although several country profiles have been done and published by this journal and other publishing houses since 2009, take the examples of Botswana (Moustakas and Tshube 2020), Cameroon (Clarke and Ojo 2016), Columbia (Morales Fontanilla 2020), Vanuatu (Kobayashi *et al.* 2017), Hong Kong (Zheng 2015), Ghana (Charway and Houlihan 2020), Lebanon (Nassif and Amara 2015), Norway (Skille and Säfvenbom 2011), the UK (Grix and Phillpots 2014), South Africa (Jacobs *et al.* 2018) and Kenya (Kipchumba and Chepyator-Thomson 2015), to date, no country profile has been published on Uganda in spite of its sporting magnum opus, yet a lot Houlihan's works clearly illustrate how such sport policy analytical reviews are not only rich and electrifying for readers or critical in influencing the reshaping of national sport systems but they also play a relevant role in theoretical and conceptual framework building and refinement by adding to the depth of empirical data in debates about multilevel governance, social capital, policy regimes and much more (Houlihan *et al.* 2009, Houlihan 2012, 2016, Houlihan and Zheng 2013).

This article relies on official policy documents, strategic plans, reports, books, journal articles and consultations from some of the specific stakeholders in the sport industry. This paper adopted a structure relatively similar to most other country profiles that have been published by this journal. The paper begins with a brief synopsis of Uganda's political past (above), and then examines government involvement, administrative structure, legal framework, funding mechanisms, elite sport participation and performance, the general public sport policy landscape, and the key emerging policy issues and debates.

### **Government involvement in sport**

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, it is the responsibility of the state to promote recreation and sport for the general public (see Endnote 1). In a similar vein, the obligations

of providing, managing, administering, controlling, supervising, developing and consolidating the governance in sports in Uganda are a responsibility of the central government certainly due to its vital political, economic, social and societal role. The initiative of state-led provision of sport in Uganda was most intensified in 2004 after the government put in place a National Physical Education and Sport Policy (NPESP) with a major intention of creating a healthy, united, democratic and industrious nation through physical activity and sport excellence. This policy mainly targeted developing a society with a high-quality life, creating a resilient, dynamic, integrated, diversified, and competitive economy, and eradicating mass poverty through the reduction of youth unemployment (Ministry of Education and Sports 2004).

The Uganda government through the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) links up and coordinates sports with the National Council of Sports (NCS) and other ministries and government bodies such as the Parliament of Uganda and ministries such as health, local government, finance, labour, tourism, wildlife and antiquities; foreign affairs; internal affairs; works and transport; Kampala affairs, justice, defence, and veteran affairs, ministries and their respective department directorates and semi-autonomous agencies (see Table 1 for details). It is worth noting the involvement of all these government institutions in sport is intended to ensure that sport fosters unity, patriotism and a spirit of nationalism among the population while at the same time providing an enabling environment and basis for securing funding from sponsors, donors, private sector and individual involvement in sport policy in the country and also aids in developing sport as a key profession. Studies by (Houston 2018, Abonga and Brown 2022) claim that the government needs to offer a more broad comprehension of the function of sport in relation to peacemaking and restoration. That's very important to a country like Uganda which has frequently been disturbed by wars and political-related instabilities.

According to the MoES Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan 2017/18–2019/20 (2017), mainstreaming Uganda's sport sector is one of the government's strategic objectives. To achieve this, seven different governmental sport priorities are outlined, these include (1) promotion of sport, (2) strengthening policy and legal frameworks, (3) facilitation of national sport teams, (4) construction of new sports infrastructure, (5) rehabilitation and improved management of existing sports infrastructure, (6) implementation of coaching qualification initiatives to allow for the development of elite sport coaches and improve talent identification and (7) revitalisation of District Sports Councils. However, despite the various priorities in place, the importance and emphasis, in the actual sense, put on these priorities is still asymmetrical. Thus, efforts should be made to strike a pertinent balance between these priorities.

Bearing all these carefully in mind, it should be pointed out that state intervention in sport has a long history and plays a leading role in steering the public sector sport policy. In Uganda's perspective, for example, this has not only evident in solving wrangles in football (Uganda's most popular sport) but also across many other sporting disciplines; this involvement, however, is not only characterised by optimistic intentions but also holds tight of several pessimistic attributes such as increased scrutiny and political pressure (Schatzberg 2010). Consequently, this study observes that at times, it's important for the government to understand the scope, magnitude and timing of its intervention in certain sports issues.

### **Sport administrative structure**

Uganda has a system in place to ensure that most of the key aspects of sport provision, participation, progression and performance are catered for at local, regional and national levels.

Therefore, due to its (sport) ever-growing importance, Uganda's sport structure is becoming more multifarious, varied, dynamic and complex.

According to Hallmann and Petry (2013), Uganda's present sport system is primarily underpinned by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), its Physical Education and Sports department (PES), and its agency bodies locally called the National Council of Sports (NCS). These work in conjunction

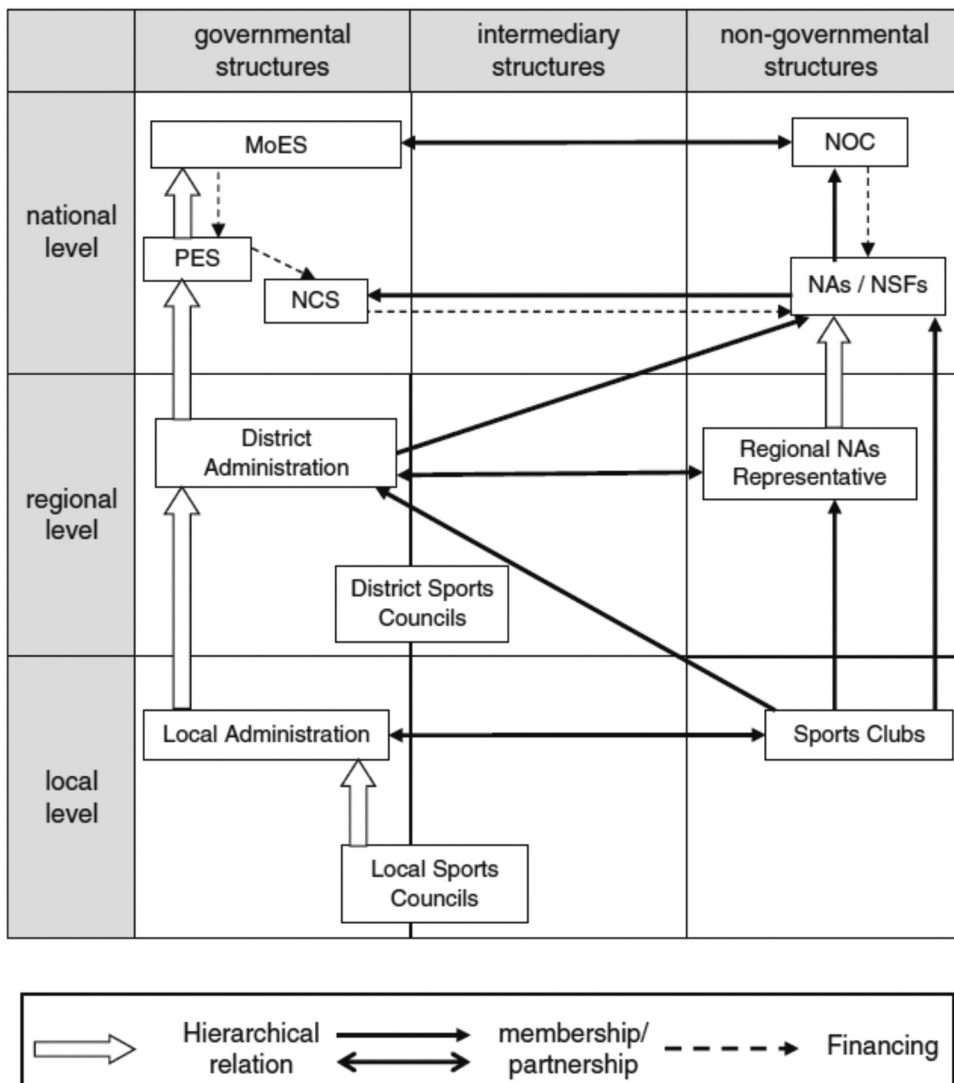
**Table 1.** Government ministries, departments and agencies involved in advancing Uganda's sport policy.

Departments, directorate or autonomous agencies	Government ministries	Key role
<i>Core or primary</i>		
Physical Education and Sports department (PES)	Ministry of Education and Sports	Provide for technical support, guide, coordinate, regulate and promote the delivery of sport policy
National Council of Sports (NCS)		
National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)		
Public universities such as Kyambogo, Makerere		
Mandela National Stadium Privatisation Unit (PU)	Ministry of Planning, Finance, and Economic Development (MoFPED)	Mobilise financial resources and enhance revenue collection to finance the budget
Uganda Revenue Authority (URA)		
Education and Sports committee	Parliament of Uganda (POU)	Pass or enact laws (such as bills, acts) for good governance of sport
Uganda Tourism Board (UTB)	Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife, and Antiquities (MTWA)	Ensure promotion of tourism through sport
Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA)		
<i>Other or secondary</i>		
Health Education and Promotion Division	Ministry of Health (MoH)	Promote better health through physical activity and sport
Department of Non-communicable Diseases		
Directorate of Education and Social Services	Ministry of Kampala Capital City Affairs	Provide, support, guide coordinate, regulate and promote quality sports activities to the community of Uganda's Capital, Kampala.
Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF)	Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs (MODVA)	Enhance physical fitness through sports in the armed forces
Embassies and Missions abroad	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)	Promote Uganda's sport as a foreign policy instrument
Uganda Police Force (UPF)	Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)	Create a safe environment for sport through maintaining law and order
Uganda Prisons Services (UPS)		
Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control		
District Administration Department	Ministry of Local Government (MoLG)	Support sport activities at local levels ( <i>cities, districts, municipalities, sub-counties, parishes, villages, town councils, municipal and city divisions</i> )
Local Economic Development Department		
Policy and Planning Department		
Department of Youth and Children	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD)	Promote of gender equality, social protection and communities transformation through sport
Directorate of Gender and Community Development		
Directorate of Engineering and Works	Ministry of Works and Transport (MoWT)	Develop public sport infrastructure and other related works such as roads.
Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA)		
Legal Advisory Services department	Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs	Represent Government in civil suits for and against it and draft laws
Law Development Centre (LDC)		
The Uganda Law Reform Commission (ULRC)		

Source: Developed for this study.

with National Sports Federations (NSFs) and National Sports Associations (NSAs) and the Uganda Olympic Committee (UOC), which specialises in the delivery, coordination and supervision of Olympic-related sport development programmes at the national level. Similarly, District Sports Councils (DSCs) and Local Sports Councils (LSCs) assist the implementation and dissemination of sports policy at regional and local levels, respectively. Based on the above, it is crystal clear that the central government does not work in isolation, it has a wide range of stakeholders it works with and through at all levels (for details, see [Figure 1](#)).

The 1964 NCS Act of Parliament led to the establishment of the current NCS, a statutory organ and semi-autonomous agency under the MoES, gave it status, powers, and mandate to control and solely regulate sports of all kinds in conjunction with NSFs and NSAs, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uganda. The NCS, a body affiliated to the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa (SCSA) and other pertinent sports organisations, serves as an apex institution that coordinates and legalises all national sports activities. The responsibilities of NCS range from promoting sport development,



**Figure 1.** The administrative structure of Uganda's sport system. Source: Hallmann and Petry (2013).

initiating national and international partnerships and collaborations, branding Uganda's sport, building and improving Uganda's image through sports globally, encouraging good working inter-relationships among sports federations, advising the Minister of State for Sport, stimulating interest in sports at all levels, allocating funding and approving of expenditures of sports federations. Its major objective is to offer a suitable environment for the promotion of and investment in sport in Uganda while at the same time maximising opportunities for all nations to take part and stand out in sports (National Council of Sports 1964, 2020, 2021b).

To date, more than 50 NSFs and NSAs are recognised by the NCS of Uganda (either registered as *Associations, Trusts* or *NGOs*, etc.). They govern the respective sports disciplines under the laws of their line of International Sports Federations (ISFs) and regional or continental governing bodies. These bodies are voluntary and non-profit-making organisations, and currently, a total of seven federations have recently been categorised by the NCS as the *niche federations* including football, netball, basketball, athletics, university sports, Paralympics committee, boxing and rugby federations. These and all the other federations enshrined in the administrative structure of Uganda's sport policy are outlined below in the chronological order of their establishment (see Table 2).

Following its establishment in 1950, the UOC took charge of developing, promoting and protecting the Olympic Movement activities in Uganda. To date, the body in charge of organising the summer and winter Olympic Games and the Commonwealth Games, the Youth Olympic Games, Paralympics games and other Olympic-related events. The UOC also has exclusive rights to use the Olympic brand and symbol and uses these to market and promote all its programmes and activities at local, regional and international levels. This body receives funding support from the Olympic Solidarity (OS), a programme designed jointly by the IOC and the NOCs. Its main purpose is to assist the officially recognised NOCs such as Uganda's (UOC) fulfill their goals, mission and objectives and promote the ideals of the Olympic Movement. Support from this programme allows that UOC to promote training and education opportunities for athletes, coaches, sports administrators and other stakeholders in the sports community. The Olympic Charter clearly stipulates that although the UOC like other NOCs across the globe receives support money from the government, it is not a state institution. The responsibilities of the UOC in Uganda's sport policy structure include but are not limited to promoting Olympism, ensuring observance of the Olympic Charter, encouraging high-performance sport development, adopting and implementing the World Anti-Doping Code and taking action against discrimination and violence in sport in Uganda (International Olympic Committee 2021a, International Olympic Committee 2021b).

## **Sport policy landscape**

Like many African countries, the current sport policy landscape in Uganda is a hodgepodge of different plans and approaches that lack configuration, consistency and coherency. It is characterised by a dichotomy of economic, social and political trajectories.

Since the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda requires the government to promote sport for its people, a lot of value must be attached to putting in place effective sport legislation. It is worth noting that the current sports legislation has garnered far too much criticism, for instance, the 1964 NCS Act, Cap 48, has been reported to be very outdated and incapable of governing contemporary sports. It is claimed by many federations that the 2004 National Physical Education and Sport Policy doesn't fully address the challenges of modern sport. Below is a synopsis of this major sport policy documentation.

### ***The National Council of Sport (NCS) Act, 1964***

Assented on 22 June 1964 and commenced on 25 June 1964, the NCS Act led to the establishment of the NCS, a statutory body mandated to encourage sports growth in Uganda. As per the provisions of this Act, the NCS is the current sole sports regulator and implementer of government policies that

**Table 2.** A chronology of the establishment of national sport federations and associations in Uganda.

Sport	Governing body	Acronym	Year founded
Football	Federation of Uganda Football Associations <sup>a</sup>	FUFA	1924
Athletics	Uganda Athletics Federation <sup>a</sup>	UAF	1925
Badminton	Uganda Badminton Association	UBA	1942
Golf	Uganda Golf Union	UGU	1940s
Hockey	Uganda Hockey Association	UHA	1944
Tennis	Uganda Tennis Association	UTA	1948
Cricket	Uganda Cricket Association	UCA	1952
Boxing	Uganda Boxing Federation	UBF	1950
Rugby	Uganda Rugby Union <sup>a</sup>	URU	1955
Judo	Uganda Judo Association	UJA	1960s
Basketball	Federation of Uganda Basketball Associations <sup>a</sup>	FUBA	1962
Body Building	Uganda Body Building and Fitness Association	UBFA	1965
Netball	Uganda Netball Federation <sup>a</sup>	UNF	1966
Taekwondo	Uganda Taekwondo Federation	UTF	1970s
Handball	Uganda Handball Federation	UHF	1971
Chess	Uganda Chess Federation	UCF	1972
Wrestling	Uganda Wrestling Federation	UWF	1976
Swimming	Uganda Swimming Federation	USF	1978
Rowing	Uganda Rowing Federation	URF	1980s
Archery	Uganda Archery Federation	UAF	1987
Baseball and Softball	Uganda Baseball & Softball Association	UBASA	1989
Volleyball	Uganda Volleyball Federation	UVF	1990
Table Tennis	Uganda Table Tennis Association	UTTA	1990s
Squash	Uganda Squash Racket Association	USRA	1990s
Weightlifting	Uganda Weightlifting Federation	UWF	1971
University Sports	Association of Uganda University Sports <sup>a</sup>	AUUS	1992
Paralympics	Uganda Paralympic Committee <sup>a</sup>	UPC	1992
Kickboxing	Uganda Kickboxing Federation <sup>b</sup>	UKBF	1993
Draughts	Uganda Draughts Federation	UDA	1997
Cycling	Uganda Cycling Association	UCA	2000
Canoeing	Uganda Canoe Kayak Federation	UC-KA	2000s
Darts	Uganda Darts Association	UDA	2000s
Ludo	Uganda Ludo Federation	ULF	2001
Motorcross	Federation of Uganda Motor Club of Uganda	FMU	2001
Scrabble	Scrabble Association of Uganda	SAU	2001
Pool	Pool Association of Uganda	PAU	2003
Rollball	Uganda Rollball Association	URA	2003
Woodball	Uganda Woodball Federation	UWbF	2006
VX sport	VX Uganda	VX	2006
Fencing	Uganda Fencing Association	UFA	2006
Dragon Boat	Uganda Dragon Boat Federation	UDBF	2006
Lacrosse	Uganda Lacrosse Association	ULA	2009
Frisbee	Uganda Ultimate Frisbee Association	UAFA	2010
Skating	Uganda Skating Association	USA	2010
Floorball	Uganda Floorball Association	UFA	2012
Deaf Sports	Uganda Deaf Sports Federation	UDSF	2013
American Football	American Football Federation of Uganda	AFAU	2015
Sport Climbing	Uganda Sport Climbing Federation	USCF	2016
Zurkhaneh	Uganda Zurkhaneh Sports Association	UZSA	2017
Kabadi	Kabadi Federation of Uganda	KFU	2017
Gymnastics	Gymnastic Association of Uganda	GAU	2018
DanceSport	Uganda DanceSport Federation	UDSF	2020

<sup>a</sup>Federations categorised as Niche sport federations.

<sup>b</sup>Federation(s) whose certificate invoked and cancelled by NCS.

Source: Developed for this study.

are geared towards the enhancement, promotion and growth of the sport sub-sector. The main objectives of this act include but are not limited to supporting the progress, promotion and organisation of all forms of sport, enhancing cooperation among NSFs and NSAs, approving their respective national and international sporting competitions and festivals and sponsoring sports coaching scholarships (National Council of Sports 1964). However, it is worth noting that, this legal

framework is not in tandem with the modern sport market since outdatedness or obsolescence does not match with the current sports development goals, objectives and needs. This has thus created a colossal policy gap thus leaving behind an urgent need for reforming, reviewing, refining and remodelling Uganda's sport policy.

### ***National Physical Education and Sport Policy (NPESP), 2004***

A critical analysis of Uganda's currently NPESP goals and objectives reveals that the government is determined to achieve a healthy, united, democratic and productive nation through physical and sports through improved planning, managing and administering of sports among the top of the national agenda and priorities (Ministry of Education and Sports 2004). Therefore, based on the existing structure, it is evident that the government of Uganda considers sport to be an integral, powerful and dominant feature of national development (Keim and De Coning 2014). The objectives of this policy are:

- Managing and administering sport at local, regional and national levels
- Building capacity of the sport sector
- Supporting and strengthening institutions involved in managing and administering sport across the whole country
- Professionalising and commercialising sport
- Monitoring, strengthening and reviewing sport education at all levels
- Constructing of new sports facilities for all sports disciplines in all regions of the countries
- Rehabilitating, upgrading and revamping existing national sport, facilities
- Providing modern sports training equipment and materials for high-level training and competition
- Recognising excellent athletes at national, regional and international sports competitions (Ministry of Education and Sports 2004).

There have been several debates and arguments that there is a big weakness on the part of the implementation of this policy, some government policy critics have for the past decade argued that this policy is more physical education than sport centred. Simultaneously, this policy has faced condemnation certainly because it does not address or pay keen attention to certain political, economic and socio-cultural 'issues of modern sport', for instance, *good* governance, human and social rights, sports tourism, sport diplomacy, doping, racism, sport betting and gambling, match-fixing, homophobia, hooliganism and violence, fans or spectators, digitalisation, professionalisation, sport aid, e-sports, employment relations, diversity, free movement of professionals, informal sport, grassroots sport, safeguarding, volunteering, refugees, social inclusion, Para sport and the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***The new (proposed) Nation Sport Bill (2021/2022)***

As one of the key strategies to reinforce policy, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks for effective governance in Uganda, the new national sports bill was drafted with support of the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs in 2021 (Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development 2022). According to Magogo (2021), the increasing recognition of the economic, social and political value of sport vis-à-vis the prevailing sport policy gaps created the need to establish a new, revised, refined and reformed national sport policy. In March 2022, the proposed National Sport Bill was introduced to the Parliament of Uganda by Honourable Eng. Moses Hashim Magogo (see Endnote 2) as a private member bill pending future parliamentary readings and presidential approval (signature). This bill is intended to enhance the management, governance, development

and regulation of amateur, recreational and professional sport in Uganda. The bill is also engineered to ultimately institute a National Sports Commission (NSC) at the expense of the NCS.

Some of the key objectives of this proposed National Sport Bill are:

- To streamline, strengthen and modernise the law relating to the incorporation and registration of NSFs and NSAs and affiliated bodies such as sports clubs.
- To recognise, register and incorporate national sports organisations and sports clubs.
- To formalise the state's duties under international sports regulating statutes.
- To stop vices such as match-fixing, corruption and embezzlement of funds, unlawful sports manipulation and illegal sport betting.
- To promote and encourage a drug-free sporting environment.
- To safeguard the commercial rights associated with sporting events and competitions.
- To establish a national sport dispute resolution and arbitration system that is permitted under international sports governing regulations.
- To ensure the provision, maintenance and safeguarding sports infrastructure for national and international sporting events.
- To establish a free, fair and transparent mechanism for awarding national associations, teams and individuals for international sporting achievements.
- To take care of related sport issues.

However, it is worth noting that although some government policy critics concur that this bill may go a long way in covering up most of the sport policy gaps left in the old policies mentioned above, on the contrary, they argue that this new Sport Bill as the case is with the existing sport policies lacks stakeholder 'inclusivity' and thus it is bound to remain a 'stillbirth'. As one of the solutions to this problem, Peng *et al.* (2018) suggest that in order to effectively implement such policy legislations, there is need to appreciate and embrace the participation of potential policy entrepreneurs such as academicians, commercial sponsors, and the media.

Holistically, at the national level, Uganda has a relatively strong basic legal framework for regulating the sport system and mechanisms. The several foundational legal frameworks, policies, acts and instruments for sports have undergone fundamental changes since the early 1920s up to date. These help to effectively manage, strengthen and implement Uganda's sport policy. These among the many other policy legislations help in advancing Uganda's sport policy by filling the existing legal vacuum (see [Appendix I](#)).

## **Sport funding**

The significant financing sources for sport growth and sustainability in Uganda are varied although government grants or subvention recurrent is the most notable. Also, there are several corporate companies that invest in Uganda's sport in one way or another, for example, MTN Uganda, Airtel Uganda, Nile Breweries Limited, Vision Group Limited, Castle Lager, Tusker Lite, National Insurance Corporation (NIC), Crown Beverages Limited (Pepsi), Century Bottling Company Limited (Coca-Cola), Right to Play, UNICEF, Shell, KFC, British Council, German Government, Chinese Government, DHL, Stanbic Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, Sheraton Hotel.

Most of the financial support is in form of cash rewards for the most excelling sportspersons at national and international competitions, funding support for the construction of new sports facilities and rehabilitation of sporting facilities such as stadia, and the annual funding to the sports federations. In a bid to streamline funding in the sport sector, particularly the sports organisations, the NCS formulated several funding guidelines in 2019. Examples include the general funding guidelines and the rewards and recognition guidelines. This is expected to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of public funding of key sport policy activities (National Council of Sports 2020). In spite of the availability of these funding channels and guidelines, demand for additional funding for sport is

anticipated to remain incredibly high huge due to the paradigm change in terms of professionalisation, diversification, modernisation and the skyrocketing unemployment rates partly brought about by the increasing Ugandan youth population. More so, the ever-increasing state discovery of the political, social, economic and wider societal role of sport is also partly accountable for the heightening funding demand trajectory. Despite the insufficiency of financial and budgetary resources and requirements to meet the present and emerging sport priorities, the Ugandan government of late shows a relatively greater degree of commitment to funding the promotion of sport, recreation, physical education and related activities, especially at national and international levels.

Between the financial years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, there was a significant increment in Uganda's sport budget from UGX 17 billion to UGX 25 billion and this indicated an improved government interest and devotion towards developing Uganda's sport industry (see Endnote 4).

According to the additional Budget Support to the NCS for the FY 2021/2022-2022/2023, there has been a progressive increment in funding to the sports sub-sector by the Ugandan Government, that is, from UGX. 444,164,840 (USD 120,331) in the FY 1998/1999 to 25,581,283,000 (USD 69,303,369) in the FY 2019/2020. It is important to note that this remarkable subvention rise has played a fundamental role in facilitating participation in significant international competitions, supporting the budgets of niche sports federations, supporting sport development and promotion, and payment of wages (National Council of Sports 2021a).

It is worth mentioning that the allocation of funding towards the sport sector, most specifically to NSFs and NSAs, has for long been and still remains purposely subjective. Seven federations that include *Football, Netball, Boxing, Rugby, Paralympics, university sports* and *basketball* federations have on several occasions been given additional and direct budget support from the government through the NCS to support some of their vital activities. These bodies have also been given special funding prioritisation and, above all, they are currently classified as '*niche sports federations.*' Between July 2019 and June 2020, over UGX 13.2 billion was distributed amongst these federations, although still the football and netball federations took a lion's share of over UGX 8.4 billion and UGX 1.7 billion, respectively (National Council of Sports 2020, 2021a). This further demonstrates the existence of unequal distribution and allocation of funds in the sport sector.

There is also a growing interest by the state to support the participation, growth and success of professional and elite sport in Uganda. This is manifested in the increasing degree of specialisation and budgeting of financing for participation in elite sport events. The latest example is the over UGX 6.7 billion supplementary budget funding allocation to support participation in international sporting competitions such as the Olympics and Paralympics Games, Commonwealth Games, All Africa Games, East Africa Community Games, and Islamic Solidarity Games (National Council of Sports 2021a). Government support and funding for sport in Uganda are also evidenced by the department of PES department's efforts to allocate funds to various outstanding sport budget items, such as review and formulation of policies, laws, strategies, and guidelines, sport management and capacity development, contribution to international sports organisations such as (International Swimming Federation, World Anti-Doping Agency), sport schools centres of sports excellences, physical education training and teaching and other key projects such as operationalisation of the National High Altitude Training Centre (NHATC) and other national sports infrastructure. These initiatives are not only expected to create a commercial environment but they are as well projected to boost international sporting success. Thus, it is buttressed by Brouwers, Sotiriadou and De Bosscher's recent study that asserts that the commercial environment has become an important factor that influences not only international success but also sport-specific policies (Brouwers *et al.* 2021).

### **Elite sport participation and performance**

To nations across the globe, participation and performance in elite sport have become an important component and factor of their sport system setup. This is simply because high-performance sport is entwined with numerous commercial, social, political and cultural gains. Thus, it's important for current

scholars to continue exploring the existing interrelationships between elite sport policies and international sporting performance and achievements and the benefits within (De Bosscher *et al.* 2021).

In comparison to many other former British colonies, Uganda is one of the African countries with a growing pride in elite sport participation and achievement courtesy of runners John Akii-bua, Stephen Kiprotich, Peruth Chemutai and Joshua Cheptegei leading the way in the gold medal category. Similarly, other runners like Davis Kamoga, Jacob Kiplimo and boxers like Eridadi Mukwanga and Leo Rwabwogo have made Uganda proud by winning more medals at the Olympic Games (see [Table Appendix II](#)).

Besides its good performance in the Summer Olympics, Uganda is one of the best performing African countries at the Commonwealth Games. Between the 1954 Vancouver Games and the 2018 Gold Coast Games, Uganda has accumulated a total of 53 Commonwealth Games medals (16 gold, 16 silver and 21 bronze medals). At the continental level, between the 1965 Brazzaville Games and the 2019 Rabat Games, Uganda has so far won 87 medals at the All Africa Games (22 gold, 21 silver and 44 bronze). Other international sporting events in which Uganda participated and exhibited excellent performance include athletics (IAAF World Athletics Championships, Diamond Leagues, World Junior Championships, Africa Junior Championships and International Marathons such as Monaco, Zurich, London, Moscow), swimming (CANA Junior Africa Swimming Championships, CANA Zone III and IV Swimming Championships), rugby (Rugby Safari Sevens), football (CECAFA Senior Football Tournament, CECAFA U-15 Boys Football Tournament, CECAFA U-17 Girls Football Tournament), university sports (Summer World University Games), handball (Africa Youth Handball Championships), netball (Africa Netball Championships, East Africa Club Netball Championships) and Para sports (Africa Para-Athletics Championships, World Military Games) (National Council of Sports 2020). This implies that Uganda's good participation and performance are not only centred on Athletics and Boxing but are also across many other sporting disciplines on continental and world stages.

### **Trends, emerging issues and debates**

As the case is with many other African economies, there is still a big debate on what should be the key priorities of the sport policy of Uganda. Whereas the government attaches a lot of value to mass participation and sporting success in elite sport events such as the Olympics and other international sporting events, some scholars assert that Uganda should instead focus on availing adequate capital, human and organisational resources baskets to sport programmes at the grassroots levels, with special focus on talent identification, coaching development and development of grass-root sporting infrastructure. We agree this is pertinent because, Uganda has not only experienced a lack of access to modern and standard sport facilities, equipment and training facilities but also an absence of strategic sports development planning. This somehow concurs with Valenti, Scelles and Morrow, whose research pointed to youth participation, expansion of competitions, improvement of sporting venues, increased financial investment, provision of highly specialised coaching and related human resource, provision of appropriate sporting environment for the players, officials and fans as some of the key factors that not only influence success of international success in women sport but also in the whole elite sport space (Valenti *et al.* 2019).

On the other hand, Uganda's international success in sports disciplines such as Athletics and Boxing has instigated debates and discussions on should whether or not the country needs to adopt new approaches of strategic clustering and prioritisation as the case is or once been in countries like China, Jamaica, the UK (the United Kingdom) and Australia, as this increases the chances of gaining and sustaining absolute competitive advantage and ultimately achieving great success. On this, Houlihan and Zheng (2013) believe that identifying one or more niche sports in which a nation possesses a considerable competitive advantage and devoting enough resources is critical for big sports powers' continued success, and it is becoming increasingly necessary for medium sports powers' success.

In a similar vein, it is reported that the intervention by the government in sport should aim more at putting in place innovative approaches for striking a balance between mass sports provision and elite sport development, than exerting excess political control, pressure and expedience over sports, since these have proven to be fraught with issues such as corruption, embezzlement, criticisms and bureaucratic tendencies. These concerns have for a long time thwarted Uganda's sport hence offering an advantage to its top competitors Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, Ghana, Egypt and Nigeria.

Arguably, the current burning challenges such as amateurism, sport labour migration, gender inequalities, Para sport and other concerns that have come along with globalisation should be solved by developing a holistic framework for modernising, commercialisation, and professionalising local sport. Talking globalisation, economies like Uganda and Kenya have the potential to leverage on items, for example, sport tourism (for instance, high altitude training venues and the unique local training environment and lifestyle of their elite runners, etc.), to attract international sports tourists hence boosting sport revenue streams for Uganda. This could be one of the innovative ways that policymakers can use to improve the entrepreneurial capabilities of sport sector and the sport policy to be specific. This is in line with Ratten (2017) whose study affirms that 'entrepreneurial sport policy' is the way to go in modern sport as it allows for more innovative decision-making processes concerning the marketing and growth strategies around the sport market.

In summary, the Uganda government has to put more emphasis on formulation and implementation of new sport policy and interconnected sports bills and laws (in consultation with all stakeholders especially the NSFs and the UOC), this reformed and revised policy should be updated and in line with the present and dynamic sporting world. This, however, ought to be preceded by some deliberate efforts of sport policy standardisation, policy learning, and policy transfer from already established economies such as the UK, Japan, Australia, France, Canada, the USA and China. This ultimately allows for sport policy convergence which Houlihan (2012) affirms helps to streamline the policy motives, agenda, aspirations, ideology, inputs, implementation, momentum and impact, thus allowing for the improvement of the overall policy framework of a nation.

## Notes

1. According to Uganda's Constitution of 1995 with Amendments through 2017, the provision of sport and recreation is one of the main mechanisms for protecting and promoting fundamental and other human rights and freedoms. Thus, this should be one of the key responsibilities of the state or government.
2. Engineer Moses Hashim Magogo, the mover of the proposed 2021/2022 National Sports Bill, is the current president of the Federation of Uganda Football Associations (FUFA), an Executive Committee member of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) and a Member of Parliament of Budiope East Constituency, Buyende District of Eastern Uganda. Arguably, Magogo is one of the finest and most thoroughbred sport administrators in Uganda and Africa.
3. *Buganda* is a Bantu kingdom found in Uganda. It is the kingdom of the Baganda, one of the greatest traditional kingdoms in modern-day East Africa, comprising Buganda's central region, which includes Kampala, Uganda's capital. The 14 million Baganda people make up Uganda's largest area, accounting for approximately 27% of the country's population.
4. UGX or Uganda Shillings is the national currency. In 2020–2022, on average, 1 UGX = 0.00026 Euro or 0.00027 US dollars

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## Appendices

### Appendix I – Holistic legal framework

- (i) The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995
- (ii) The Manifesto of the ruling party
- (iii) The NCS Act, 1964 (Act 14/1964)
- (iv) The NCS Statutory Instrument, 2014 (No 48/2014)
- (v) The National Physical Education and Sports Policy, 2004
- (vi) The National Development Plan
- (vii) The Uganda Law Reform Commission (ULRC)
- (viii) The Local Governments Act, 2008 (Cap 243/2008)
- (ix) The Nakivubo War Memorial Stadium Trust Act, 1953 (Cap 47/1953)
- (x) The Education Act, 1970 (Cap 127/1970)
- (xi) The Historical Monuments Act, 1968 (Cap 46/1968)
- (xii) The National Women's Council Act, 1993 (Cap 318/1993)
- (xiii) The Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Act, 2005 (No 7/2005)
- (xiv) The National Council for Disability Act, 2003 (Act 14/2003)
- (xv) The National Youth Council Act, 1993 (Cap 319/1993)
- (xvi) The Children Act, 1997 (Cap 59/1997)
- (xvii) The Boy Scouts and Girl Guides Act, 1922 (Cap 45/1922)
- (xviii) The National Council for Children Act, 1996 (Cap 60/1996)
- (xix) The National Curriculum Development Centre Act, 1973 (Cap 135/1973)
- (xx) The Uganda National Cultural Centre Act, 1959 (Cap 59/1959)
- (xxi) The Stage Plays and Public Entertainments Act, 1943 (Cap 49/1943)
- (xxii) The Education (Pre-primary, primary and Post primary) Act, 2008 (Act 13/2008)
- (xxiii) The Gender in Education policy, 2010
- (xxiv) The Education and Sports Sector HIV Prevention Strategic Plan 2011–2015
- (xxv) The Trustees Incorporation Act, 1939 (Cap 165/1939)
- (xxvi) The Kampala Capital City Act, 2010 (Act 1/2010)
- (xxvii) The Uganda Tourism Act, 2008 (Act 2/2008) (Uganda Law Reform Commission 2018).

### Appendix II- Performance of Uganda at the Olympic games from 1968 to 2020.

Games	Sport	Events	Medal	Athlete
1968 Mexico City	Boxing	Men's bantamweight	Silver	Eridadi Mukwanga
1968 Mexico City	Boxing	Men's flyweight	Bronze	Leo Rwabwogo
1972 Munich	Athletics	Men's 400 metre hurdle	Gold	John Akii-bua
1972 Munich	Boxing	Men's flyweight	Silver	Leo Rwabwogo
1980 Mexico	Boxing	Men's welterweight	Silver	John Mugabi
1996 Atlanta	Athletics	Men's 400 metres	Bronze	Davis Kamoga
2012 London	Athletics	Men's marathon	Gold	Stephen Kiprotich
2020 Tokyo	Athletics	Women's 3000 metres steeplechase	Gold	Peruth Chemutai
2020 Tokyo	Athletics	Men's 5,000 metres	Gold	Joshua Cheptegei
2020 Tokyo	Athletics	Men's 10,000 metres	Silver	Joshua Cheptegei
2020 Tokyo	Athletics	Men's 10,000 metres	Bronze	Jacob Kiplimo

Summary: 4 Gold medals; 4 Silver medals; 3 Bronze medals (Total = 11 Olympic medals).