

HISTORY ON SPORTS AND THE FORMULATION OF THE NATIONAL SPORTS COUNCIL ACT OF PARLIAMENT NO. 64 OF 1964

In actual fact, the exact origin of Physical Education and Sports in Sierra Leone are lost in our remote pre-history and has been connected only with arrival of our colonial masters (Britain) in the 1800's. During our pre-Colonial era, knowledge about Physical Education and Sports was totally scanty. In our traditional colonial settings, physical training took the form of cultural displays in different secret societies, purely for Supremacy in an exhibition for a show of strength. This gave a youthful character to our skillful and colonial society, a beautiful and strong character, skillful and dynamic, daring yet with little intelligence or educational base. In the hinterlands, physical activities formed a major part of the styles. Everything was done from a primitive standpoint and young men were trained for activities, which constitute their daily survival and the defence of their territories. Boys and girls were groomed into natural gymnasts unconsciously as part of their transformation into adulthood, through different cultural

societies. These forms of physical training through rhythmical dances were absolutely unique.

In schools, physical activities were completely militarized with strict commands, rules and control. The educational values were damaged as the emphasis generally was on fitness. Pupils' performance in recreational activities by then was totally unimportant. Military disciplines mean individual repression rather than individual enlightenment and expansion.

By late 1945\50, most of the established sports had gained steady progress in growth and development and was now ready for wider proper international recognition. The growing need for Government support and control became evident.

Between 1945\50, The Sierra Leone Sports Committee was in charge of all sports matters. This Committee by then served as the national sports umbrella and was recognized by government. (Reference NSC. Vol. 1A policy).

In 1954, The Sierra Leone Amateur Sports Council which had been officially formed by the government took over full control of all sports matters until after Sierra Leone gained

independence as a Nation in April in 1961. The Sierra Leone Amateur sports council became formally incorporated and widely representative body was charged with the responsibility and authority for the promotion and control of amateur sports in Sierra Leone. This Council controlled sports on to the end of January, 1964, from an annual government subvention which rarely exceeded Le 12,000,00 (Twelve Thousand Leones), inclusive was international competition expenses for cricket, Football, and other sports, plus Council's secretariat duties.(Ref.1B Vol. ii, policy file). The Secretary of the Sports Council, for many years was T.F.Hope, who also was President, Sierra Leone Amateur Athletics Association and was also President for the Sierra Leone Overseas Games Committee and Chairman, Sierra Leone Tennis Association (Ref. NSC Vol. 1B, Policy file).

The significant thing about the amateur sports council was that various sports bodies were represented, together with government nominees.

Each member sports Association was totally autonomous, meaning they managed their own affairs, planned its own fixtures and arranged for international matches. The team

expenses including travelling and other fees were paid by government, through the Amateur sports council.

The concept for the formation of the National Sports Council of Sierra Leone by an Act of Parliament No. 64. 1964 Followed the political trend on the decision of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), that each member country must establish a specialized institution, rather than have a chaotic sports body, that will carter for the development of sports to global and continental standards, bearing in mind the impact sports can create in international political circles and that its bridges for global peace, friendship and understanding. Sierra Leone being a founding member of the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa (SCSA), which is the institution in charge of sports in the Organization for African Unity (OAU) fulfilled this obligation and have since participated in its quadrennial high profile continental sports. The main task of the Supreme Council for Sports (SCSA) is to develop, organize, promote and foster continental friendship in all sports disciplines in collaboration with other recognized continental Federations and the different zonal bodies within the continent (Ref. NSC 1A VOL iii).

The Sierra Leone government introduced a Bill in Parliament on 24th September, 1964, for the establishment of the National Sports Council in Sierra Leone. The House of Representative passed the Bill on 27th November, 1965 which eventually got Her Majesty's Royal consent on the 28th day of January 1965. The effective date of commencement of the implementation of the Act No. 64 of 1964 was 4th February, 1965. (Supplement to Sierra Leone Gazette, vol. xcvi No. 9, 1965). All of this process took place under the Governorship of I.J.C. Boston, Governor General.

The functional status of the National Sports Council since its inception has been questionable since the word 'GO'. It seems from all indications that the member Associations and the structures which should have been established, were expected to serve as Agents and Agencies respectively for the functional operations of the Sports Council Act.

Considering the vast powers and procedures of the Council, the Agents/Agencies, should have been able to formulate relevant policies for the effective enhancement and promotion of its functions with a view to strategically achieve its good objectives.

At that time only Football, Athletics, Cricket, Tennis and Boxing were the Sporting activities which had formal Sporting Associations, although other non-formal sporting disciplines had associations in existence.

The National Sport Council was functional as a Quasi-Governmental entity up to the late 1970s, when the then Ministry of Social Welfare, to which the Council was attached, decided to usurp its roles and responsibilities, thereby rendering the National Sport Council non-functional.

The situation was further compounded by the construction of a National Stadium Complex in Freetown which was opened in April, 1979. The existing formal Sports Associations then decided to operate as autonomous bodies, mostly obligated to their International Federations. This trend was also copied by the other National Sports Associations that mushroomed since the Stadium was opened, despite the fact that most of such sporting disciplines were not national in outlook and only operated around the Stadium Complex in Freetown.

This has been in function and operation until the year 1996 when the National Sports Council came under the Ministry

of Education, Youth and Sports and in 2007, it was later separated from Education and became the Ministry of Youth and Sports and further again in 2010, separated from Youth and the Sports Ministry became a Ministry on its own and stand alone.

In that light, the Ministry of Sports and the National Sports Council have been operating under the same roof as one body since.

In 2017, an Act of Parliament was past for the established of a National Sports Authority (NSA) in replacement and repealed the National Sports Council (NSC) Act of 1964, of which is presumed to be the professional and specialized wing of the Ministry of Sports for the running and governance of Sports, through the Sports Associations in executing their mandates as Sporting Disciplines in the country.

The NSA was established and it's in operation to date and its' function is to:

Promote, encourage, develop and supervise sports and sporting activities in Sierra Leone and to provide for other related matters.