WHY SPORTS FEDERATIONS MUST EMBRACE PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP



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Government reserves the right to fund different sports in the country, and the most successful sports federations should by now be proof that private sponsorship can go a long way in improving sports beyond the ordinary.

It is never right for a sports federation to depend out rightly on the government for survival because that is a sign of failure. This trend beggar's belief especially if a sport that is World Cup-bound cannot find worthy sponsors with just over a year to the tournament should stop. While it is obligatory for the government to finance sports federations, it is never a guarantee that the funds will come on time or even as requested. With the review process the National Council of Sports undertook last year to ensure that federations were compliant with the new sports law, many federations were left in limbo, yet very few have done enough to attract sponsors.

It does not matter that some sports are widely played and can attract all sorts of fans; sole dependence on the government can limit a sports federation. If a sport has a plethora of sponsors, there is little chance it will miss out on important international events while waiting for government sponsorship. A sport with strong sponsors is most likely to have consistent media appearances, as required by most sponsorship terms and conditions, which in turn require administrators to prioritise professionalism above all else.

Very rarely will such a sport stagnate because there is usually a desire to make improvements and set higher standards for the sport and all those involved in the day-to-day running of the federation or association.

Sports like rugby have seen a surge in sponsorship for both the Union and its teams. For the last few seasons, the league has been broadcast, which has improved the overall quality of the game, and officiating standards have also risen. Strong sponsorship instantly raises the stakes for those who run sports bodies and associations and demonstrates a willingness to grow and learn.

If a federation is not at its best in terms of professionalism, marketing, and its product, sponsors are unlikely to flock in. Everyone knows that the best sports federations have leagues that attract many eyeballs and not many leaders value this. If you truly value a sport, you want the league to become its biggest product. If the league is not up to standard, the chances of failure are high.

Without a doubt, government funding does make a difference for many sports federations, but it is about time sports administrators and leaders wore their titles with pride. They must challenge themselves to make sacrifices and ensure that the federations they lead have access to the best opportunities, rather than waiting on government handouts.