

Enhancing Healthy Mega-Events: Planning for Health Rights

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Abstract

Mega Sports-Events have the potential to threaten life and limb and thereby diminish spectators' and athletes' expectations of recreation, health and well-being. This paper discusses why this may occur. It will also highlight new research, which provides a model that identifies important elements associated with 'unsafe' practices at mega-sports events that may lead to spectator and participant human rights abuses. Human rights in this context includes the expectation that organisers and promoters are obliged to provide a duty of care to the participants of the event and that an individual has the right to attend or participate in mega-sports events whilst remaining in the same (or an enhanced) state of health and well-being.

Interviews with health planners with event management experience helped identify essential components of successful health planning at mega sports-events. All data were qualitatively analysed to establish a series of categories identifiable with health planning fundamentals that catered for the rights of spectators and athletes alike. The findings from the research indicate that all mega-sports events are unique in design and estimated impacts. In light of this, the developed categories guide the assessment of the dynamics associated with mega-sports events and the potential loss of human rights. We developed a model, which describes the relationship between the individual and the event variables.

The research highlights the variability of mega sports-events and the particular influences attributed to each. This paper describes a model designed to help identify impacts associated with any mega-event, and therefore, minimise potential human rights abuses. Application of the model allows the event organiser to address each

variable thereby reducing negative health-related impacts and human rights abuses.

Introduction

Mega-sports events are becoming larger and more frequent. Attending such an event should not place the individual in such a situation that diminishes their expectations of recreation, leisure, health and well being. It should be the right of every individual to attend an event knowing that there will be no compromises concerning personal safety and individual human rights. This paper argues that by following planning guidelines, regardless of the size of the sports event, actual and potential human rights abuses can be decreased.

Individual human rights include the expectation that organisers and promoters will provide a safe and hospitable environment for participants. At the same time, the expectation remains that individual's participation in mega-sports events will result in the same, or an enhanced, state of health and well being as prior to the event.

To maintain this expectation, the potential impacts associated with the event type need to be determined by the organisers before the event. With appropriate procedures in place, the potential impacts of a 'high-risk' event should decrease, whilst the accuracy associated with supplying appropriate levels and types of health-care should increase.

Historically, sports event planning involves estimating the impacts according to the previous event or from similar events. Unfortunately, this 'prediction based' planning does not allow for the individuality of the event type, consequently mega-events are often planned inappropriately (Leonard, 1996; Webster, 1996). Whilst two similar events can be compared for trend analysis, they will not

provide a complete understanding of what will happen with regard to health and human rights impacts (Spaite et. al., 1987).

There are many recent examples where inappropriate planning has led to large-scale health and safety problems and ultimately human rights abuses in mega-sports events. Some of the more memorable examples include: the 1989 Hillsborough stadium crowd crush, the 1990 Bath football stadium fire, the 1992 Bastia stadium stand collapse, the 1998 crowd crush in Guatemala City during the soccer world cup qualifiers and the 1999 Woodstock riots. These catastrophes emphasise the need for event planning to involve a process where all variables are identified and discussed with respect to an individuals' right to expect to participate in mega-events in safety.

We conducted research that identifies a mechanism that allows organisers to plan for potential human rights impacts. A series of interviews with health planners specialising in event management quantified the potential impacts that can be associated with mega-sports events. Our analysis of the findings led to the development of a model that is designed to help event organisers prepare as best they can when addressing human rights issues.

Methodology

We conducted interviews with health planners specialising in event management to establish their perception of the essential components for running events that did not affect the individuals health and human rights. We identified eighteen subjects through purposive sampling.

We conducted semi-structured interviews based around themes of inquiry (Hickman & Longman, 1994; Breakwell, 1990). We analysed the interview data qualitatively via content analysis (Berg, 1989) using an inductive approach to category analysis (Abrahamson cited in Berg, 1989). The variables identified from the data highlight many themes not completely accounted for within the literature. We then transformed these themes into health planning categories to form the basis of our model.

Results

The main findings from the research indicate that mega sports-events are all unique in design, requiring individual assessment. There appeared to be no single or absolute method of planning for a mega-event to reduce or eliminate human rights impacts.

From our analysis of the interviews, we developed a series of emergent themes into variable headings, which were further refined into categories. The four categories groups represent the first level for investigation in mega-event planning for human rights. These four groups comprise the structure of the proposed event-planning model.

Figure 1 outlines the developed model.

Table 1 lists the categories and associated variables.

Discussion

The research highlights the variability of mega sports-events, particularly the impacts attributed to like events. The identified categories and variables reflect how complex it can be planning for human rights. Whilst we were unable to identify a particular planning methodology, we were able to pinpoint essential planning components.

From the findings we were able to develop a model (Figure 1) for event organisers to use when planning their event. The model describes the relationship between the categories and event variables that could potentially impact on human rights. The model can be used to accommodate event-specific factors associated with any sports event, maximising health and well-being and minimising potential human rights abuses.

The model centres around four basic principles (categories): event administration and planning, event medical coverage, public health and environmental considerations and contingency and special requirement planning. Each group is briefly described as follows.

Figure 1. Event Planning Model for Assessing Human Rights Impacts

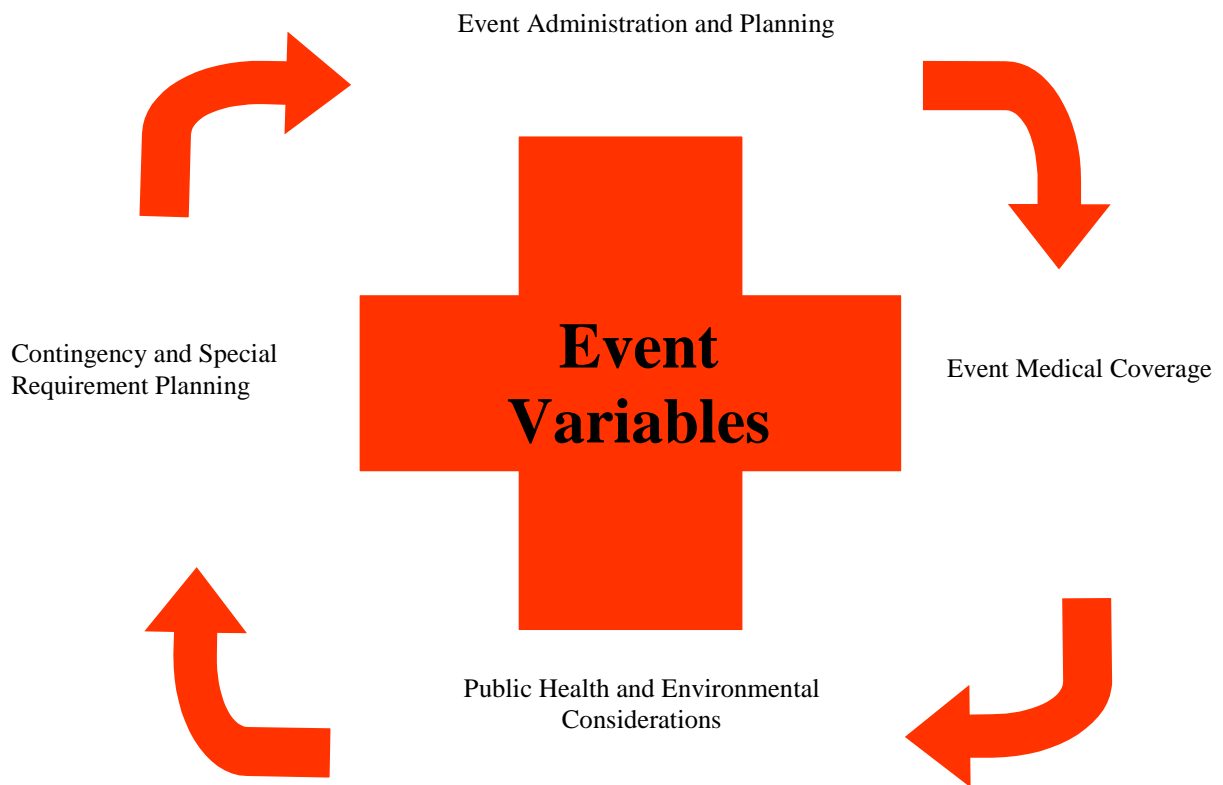


Table 1. Categories and associated variables

1. *EVENT ADMINISTRATION & PLANNING*

Administrative Co-ordination.
Channels of Communication.
Council Co-ordination.
Duration of Pre-event Planning.
Event Analysis - During and Post.
Financial Constraints.
Insurance Coverage.
Political Climate Stability.
Road, Parking and Transport Access.
Role Descriptions Education and Training for Service Providers.
Security Co-ordination.
Strategic Management Team.
Technology Utilisation.

3. *EVENT MEDICAL COVERAGE*

Counselling and Welfare Provision.
Emergency Services Coverage and Involvement.
Event Profile and Perceived Coverage.
Event Type, Site and Location Descriptions.
Impact Variability Between Settings.
Medical Coverage Rehearsal.
Minor Impact Analysis.
Mobile Medical Coverage.
On-site Care Assessment and Provision.
Predictive Research Analysis.
Staff Expertise and Health Constancy.

3. *PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS*

Environmental Health Concerns.
Food Hygiene and Contamination.
Hospital Notification and Impact Planning.
Mass Gathering Rules and Regulations.
Pedestrian and Road Trauma.
Public Health Notification and Surveillance.

4. *CONTINGENCY & SPECIAL REQUIREMENT PLANNING*

Disaster and Evacuation Planning.
Dual Mass Gathering Provision.
Mass Gathering Risk.
Regional Resource Availability and Adaptability.
Special Circumstance Availability.
Unusual Disease Spread and Provider Education.

* Each of the variable headings has a description which cannot be included in this article due to size constraints

Event Administration and Planning

This refers to the allied services associated with allocating and planning health-care and medical coverage at the mass gathering. It focuses on the event organisers' ability to co-ordinate and communicate with all service providers in advance of the sports event, ensuring for successful health provision and resources. It requires efficient administrative co-ordination including co-operation between security, local government and event administrators. Fundamental to the success of the coverage is the interaction between organisers' and their ability to research the event, safeguarding against unforeseen circumstances. All subsequent groups and associated categories are dependent on its successful implementation.

Event Medical Coverage

This group refers to all event variables associated with health planning and medical coverage. It stresses the importance of a thorough examination of the event and its dynamics before its implementation. It suggests that successful coverage will only result from correct preparation. The importance of accurate prediction techniques, site and event analysis, expertise and stakeholder involvement are all determining factors essential to achieving successful health and medical provision at sports events.

Public Health and Environmental Considerations

This group indicates recognition of the importance of allied health services. All mega-events can potentially have a huge impact on the health and well being of the individual at the event and the surrounding community. Issues relating to personal hygiene, sanitation and food contamination need addressing to minimise any impacts on individual health. Sports events of extended duration particularly need thorough monitoring and planning. Consequently, all public health issues need to be considered in advance and planned for accordingly, including notification of local health departments and hospitals.

Contingency and Special Requirement Planning

This group refers to planning for the unexpected health issues along with the predicted ones. Contingency plans including preparations for evacuation, disasters and unusual impacts. Essentially, the event organiser is required to look past basic event preparation and health coverage and foresee all possible impacts. It requires an assessment of the initial risk associated with holding the mass gathering and what 'special' considerations could arise. If the event requires 'special' planning e.g., visiting dignitaries, or is held in conjunction with another event or will display unusual health impacts e.g., World Transplant Games, extra planning and precautions need to be taken and discussed to determine the events continued 'safe' status.

Conclusion

Whilst many papers have been written on health planning requirements and medical coverage for mega-sports events, none have conducted a stakeholder analysis and none have explored the broader concept of human rights abuses.

The identification of event variables and the development of the model provide a unique opportunity for event organisers to analyse their events thoroughly prior to planning for human rights impacts. The model allows individual events to be treated individually. Until the literature provides a complete planning framework for event organisers, the use of our model will provide a closer link between human rights issues and mega-sports events.

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