

## **WADA Independent Observer Report**

African Games, 4-19 September 2015, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo

### **1. Background**

The Independent Observer (IO) program in Brazzaville adopted a cooperative approach which saw WADA and its experts partner with the African Union (AU) and the Local Organizing Committee of the African Games (COJA) to attempt to optimize anti-doping efforts at the African Games. Rather than merely audit policies and procedures to see that the administrative aspects of the doping control program were carried out appropriately and report matters retrospectively, the IO program in Brazzaville sought to identify opportunities for ongoing improvement and address them collaboratively. This collaborative approach included communication in advance of the Games between WADA, COJA and the South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport (SAIDS), who were asked by COJA to assist them with the implementation of the envisaged program.

The African Games is 'owned' by the AU. COJA, as the Local Organizing Committee, is responsible for implementing all aspects of the Games. For the Doping Control Program, COJA appointed a Health, Hygiene and Anti-Doping Commission (HHADC), within which an Anti-Doping Sub-Commission (ADSC) was established. The Chair of the ADSC was responsible for the implementation of the anti-doping program and reported to the President of the HHADC.

While taking note of general compliance with rules and procedures, the IO team was primarily engaged in looking at the implementation of doping control policy to see that plans were developed and carried out effectively, and that they optimized available human and financial resources in support of clean athletes participating in the event. Prior to the Games, the IO team reviewed COJA's Anti-Doping Rules, test distribution plans and provided feedback on specific program challenges. In addition, WADA visited Brazzaville four (4) times between November 2014 and June 2015, including participation in the Chef de Mission and Joint Stakeholders meetings, to assist with the planning of the program. The IO Chair also met with COJA during a Doping Control Officer training in Brazzaville in April 2015, which included site visits to the competition venues and in-depth discussions with the event organizers. For the Games, the IO team arrived in Brazzaville on 31<sup>st</sup> August and observed COJA's anti-doping operations through to 9<sup>th</sup> September.

The IO team was led by Dr Hans Cooman, Doping Control Coordinator from the National Anti-Doping Organisation Flanders and included the following members: Rodney Swigelaar, WADA's Director, African Regional Office, Tom May, WADA's Deputy Director of NADO/RADO Relations, and Evariste Djomo Ngnoko, the Manager of the Africa Zone IV Regional Anti-Doping Organization (RADO). The IO team sincerely thanks the AU and COJA for their support and collaboration. The team also wishes to thank and acknowledge SAIDS, notably their General Manager Mr Fahmy Galant, as well as all COJA volunteers.

## **2. Program Overview**

The IO team was informed by COJA that the overall anti-doping program of the African Games comprised of 545 urine tests and 24 blood tests. Unfortunately, as of 09 November 2015, only 328 Doping Control Forms have been entered into ADAMS. Therefore, the IO team has no way of confirming the test numbers, nor do we have any means of breaking down the tests into number of athletes, number of countries, etc. The IO team have requested this information on several occasions from COJA but have received no response. As of the same date, 569 results have been entered into ADAMS (545 urine and 24 blood), including eight adverse analytical findings and twelve atypical findings, by the WADA-accredited laboratory in Paris, France.

The doping control personnel comprised of 17 international Doping Control Officers (DCOs), 9 local DCOs and several volunteer chaperones. COJA covered airfare and accommodation for these 17 international DCOs, who were recruited from the six Regional Anti-Doping Organizations (RADOs) throughout Africa. They added significant value to the Games given the lack of experience of the local DCOs and chaperones.

It is also important to note that it was not the intention of the IO team to become actively involved in the implementation of the doping control program at the Games. However, it became very evident from the start that there was a need for us to take a more hands-on approach in assisting the COJA Anti-Doping Sub-Commission. The reasons for this are outlined in section 4.

## **3. Program Strengths**

### *a. Scope of Anti-Doping Program*

COJA committed to conducting one of the largest anti-doping programs in the history of the African Games, with a plan to conduct 500 urine tests and 50 blood tests. In comparison, 202 urine samples were collected at the last African Games (Maputo 2011). The Test Distribution Plan developed by SAIDS took into consideration the new Technical Document for Sport Specific Analysis, thereby including blood and urine samples and targeted analysis for Erythropoiesis Stimulating Agents (ESAs), Growth Hormone Releasing Factors (GHRFs) and Growth Hormone (GH). This significant investment in financial resources for the testing program should be maintained for future African Games.

### *b. Engagement of Key Partners*

During its initial discussions with WADA, COJA recognized the need to engage key partners to assist them in implementing their anti-doping program. As a result, COJA engaged the National Anti-Doping Organization in France (AFLD) for training assistance in the lead up to the Games and SAIDS for support both in advance of, and during, the Games. Both AFLD and SAIDS should be commended for their support and commitment to assisting COJA with the anti-doping activities.

### *c. Doping Control Personnel*

One of the biggest strengths of the Games was the commitment and dedication of the doping control personnel, in particular the DCOs – both international and local. The decision to accept a recommendation by WADA to invite international DCOs was critical in ensuring

the sample collection process was done adequately. The international DCOs were often appointed as lead DCOs for each test mission, working with the local DCOs to assist in building their capacity. Despite very difficult working conditions (explained in detail in section 4), the DCOs conducted themselves in a professional manner. While the sample collection process sometimes took longer than you would normally expect, the DCOs did their best to ensure the integrity of the process, including the sample collected, was protected at all times.

#### **4. General Observations and Recommendations for the Future**

In general, the overall management of the African Games, including the doping control program, was chaotic and unorganized. From the very beginning of the Games there were overall organizational issues with accreditation, accommodation, transport, communication, etc. These problems filtered down and impacted the doping control program. Despite the best efforts of WADA, the IO team and SAIDS, the implementation of an effective anti-doping program proved challenging. In the end, COJA appear to have reached its goals regarding the number of tests; however, it is not possible, based on its observations, for the IO team to say that it was done in an effective and efficient way. There are several areas which raised concerns and must be improved for future events.

##### *a. Planning*

Since November 2014, there was continuous communication between WADA, the IO team, SAIDS and COJA, including several in-person meetings in Brazzaville. During this time COJA was provided with several tools to assist with their doping control program, including project plans, task lists, budgets, etc. Despite this assistance, it is evident that many critical areas, including some basic requirements were not included / secured during the planning process in the lead up to the event. As a result, the COJA ADSC spent most of its time, particularly at the beginning of the Games, trying to secure basic necessities required to implement its program. This resulted in a delay in the commencement of the testing program. In addition, most attempts by the Africa Zone IV RADO and the Congo NADO to provide guidance and assistance in advance of the Games were not accepted. The IO team also experienced this during its time in Brazzaville.

In addition, there was very limited support from the authorities within COJA. Several critical issues were identified early on and despite the Chair of the ADSC as well as the IO team raising these concerns, there was no assistance from COJA to rectify the situation. All of this impacted the ability to implement the anti-doping program in the most effective manner possible.

##### *b. Staffing and Doping Control Operations*

As per a recommendation from the IO team and SAIDS, a briefing session for both international and local DCOs was organized for one day prior to the Games. Unfortunately this meeting turned into an animated argument between members of the ADSC and the DCOs. In fact, many local, experienced DCOs stormed out of the meeting after being told they were being replaced by other local DCOs who had virtually no experience. As a result there was no briefing during this meeting, thus resulting in several inconsistencies observed during doping control. These inconsistencies are natural when you have experienced and inexperienced DCOs, both local and international, who have not been provided with

guidance on how to conduct the procedure during the event. While these inconsistencies often raised questions from athletes and athlete support personnel, based on the observations of the IO team during its presence at the Games none of them appear to have jeopardized the integrity of the doping control process as a whole at any time.

The working environment within COJA was dysfunctional and ineffective. The IO team witnessed several public arguments between the Chair of the ADSC and the President of the HHADC; the Vice Chair and the Chair of the ADSC; as well as the DCOs and Chaperones. The poor treatment of the DCOs was something that the IO team has never witnessed before. In one instance, the international DCOs requested a meeting with the President of the HHADC to outline some concerns over their treatment in Brazzaville – inadequate accommodation, no accreditation, no transport, lack of food and lack of clarity on their daily honorarium. Instead of attempting to discuss and resolve these issues, the President of the HHADC berated the DCOs and demanded that they accept the conditions that were being provided. This dictatorial approach was observed several times through the Games. For the good of the Games, the DCOs accepted the conditions on the promise that the situation would improve. During this time the IO team also attempted to assist by meeting with high ranking officials and sending letters to COJA leadership. However, on 15 September, with the end of the Games approaching and no improvements made, the DCOs staged a one-day strike where they demanded, at a minimum, to be paid for their time (as promised by COJA). After one day of striking a compromise was reached and the doping control program was able to continue until the end of the Games.

Despite having several ADSC members and staff working in the office, very little work seemed to be completed on a day to day basis. No advanced planning was conducted, thus resulting in the ADSC attempting to organize the testing activities on a daily basis. During the IO team's time in Brazzaville, a typical day would be as follows: the IO team would arrive at the COJA office for a daily meeting with the ADSC and the DCOs, scheduled for 8:30am. No-one from the ADSC would be present at the office and the DCOs would be stranded at their various locations due to no transport. At approximately 10:00am everyone would arrive and the meeting would begin. After 30 minutes of discussing general issues, everyone would move to another floor where the daily testing assignments, paperwork and equipment would be issued. Unfortunately the Chair of the ADSC was reluctant to delegate even the simplest tasks, despite being encouraged to do so. Therefore this process would take 1-2 hours to complete and was often chaotic, with 20-30 people in one room waiting for the Chair of the ADSC to complete the required work. Finally, once the assignments were handed out, all doping control personnel had to go directly to the venues since there was only one bus available to transport all personnel. This often resulted in DCOs and Chaperones arriving at their venues early in the day and having to wait at the venue for 8-10 hours before testing started. They would then have to wait for that one bus to pick them up at the end of the testing to transport them home. Therefore a typical day for a DCO / Chaperone would begin at 8:30am and finish at 1:00am the next morning.

### *c. Doping Control Program*

Unfortunately, the IO team has not received the information required to make a full assessment of the doping control program implemented at the Games. While the total number of tests has been received in an email from the Chair of the ADSC, there is currently no way of verifying and accessing the information since there are only a few doping control forms entered into ADAMS. This is disappointing considering the ADSC received two remote ADAMS training sessions from WADA and also on-site assistance from

a member of the IO team. When the IO team left on 9 September, two staff of the ADSC were designated to work on ADAMS. However, as of 9 November, only 328 doping control forms have been entered into ADAMS.

#### d. *Therapeutic Use Exemptions*

A TUE Committee (TUEC) was established for the Games. The IO team offered to meet with this Committee prior to the Games to review the process and address any questions it may have. Unfortunately, this did not occur. In fact, the IO team scheduled two meetings for this specific purpose. However, no-one showed up for the meetings.

The IO team was informed that five TUE applications were received during the Games, with one approved and four rejected. The IO team received a summary of each decision, but no file or information has been inputted into ADAMS or provided to WADA as per the requirements of the Code.

During the course of the Games, the IO team observed several athlete support personnel asking how the TUE process worked. It was evident that more education and awareness was needed to ensure all participants were aware of the TUE process in place for the Games.

#### e. Results Management

The Results management process is one of the IO team's biggest areas of concern related to these Games. At the beginning of the Games the IO team expressed its concern over the lack of experience of the Results Management Committee (RMC). As was attempted with the TUEC, the IO team arranged for two briefing sessions with the RMC upon arrival into Brazzaville. Unfortunately no-one showed up for the meetings and therefore no briefing was done. Based on the RM process implemented to date, our concerns were valid. This is demonstrated through the following:

- Possible Refusal – on 7 September, a Boxer from Togo was notified of his selection for doping control. After signing the notification section of the doping control form, the President of the African Boxing Confederation, who is also from Togo, approached the Chaperone and athlete, informing them that the athlete did not have to be tested. Despite being told that the athlete was selected for testing and must comply with the procedures, otherwise risking a potential anti-doping rule violation, the President of the Confederation would not permit the athlete to be tested. The athlete left and the DCO and Chaperone filed a report to COJA. Since no-one at COJA was reviewing the paperwork, it was only after the IO team reviewed the DCO Report and informed COJA did they realize something happened. Despite several follow-up inquiries, the IO team only received the RMC report on 30 September. The report and accompanying documents show major flaws in the RM process that was followed. It does not appear that the athlete was provided a hearing; and the sanction issued by the COJA RMC is outside of the jurisdiction of their rules. It also appears that the President of the Confederation has also not been dealt with properly. The IO team has attempted to obtain further clarification on this from COJA, but once again no response has been received. The information has now been forwarded to the International Federation where it is hoped that it will be processed correctly.
- Adverse Analytical Findings – As of 9 November, there were eight adverse analytical findings reported by the laboratory. Three of the AAFs were from Weightlifting, two

from Wrestling and three from Athletics. All eight findings were reported by the laboratory after the completion of the Games. Despite repeated attempts, the IO team has not received any information regarding these eight AAFs. With no doping control form in ADAMS, it is impossible for the IO team to follow the process appropriately. We are unaware of the athlete' name, whether he/she won a medal, etc. The IO team will continue to follow up and we are hopeful that the respective International Federations will also get involved and put pressure on COJA to share this information.

- Atypical Findings – As of 9 November, there were 12 Atypical Findings reported by the laboratory. Despite several follow up attempts by the IO team, there is currently zero information available from COJA regarding these findings. It is once again hopeful that the respective IFs will be provided the required information soon so the appropriate follow up, including target testing, can be done.

f. *Legacy*

The Republic of Congo is a member of the Africa Zone IV RADO, thus receiving direct support and guidance from WADA. It has established a National Anti-Doping Organization, with the Head of the NADO also representing the country on the RADO Board. The Chair of the ADSC has no involvement in the NADO and this appears to have caused friction and issues within the country. For example, through the RADO and the local NADO, WADA organized a Doping Control Officer training workshop in April 2015 in Brazzaville to assist in building local capacity, for both the Games and the future. There were approximately 21 local DCOs from Brazzaville trained, with many of them already experienced in sample collection. The expectation, as agreed to by COJA, was for these DCOs to form the core of the personnel for the Games. However, for reasons that are still not clear, the COJA ADSC decided to recruit new DCOs, with no link to the NADO or RADO, and held another DCO training in August, one month before the start of the Games. During the Games, COJA decided to only use the new, inexperienced DCOs who were trained in August, ignoring the DCOs who were trained by the RADO/NADO. The same situation occurred with Results Management and TUEs. COJA resisted any recommendation regarding the use of local, existing RADO/NADO trained capacity (including DCOs, RMC, TUEC).

Based on these internal (and likely personal) conflicts, it appears that most of those involved in the anti-doping program at the Games will not be involved in the NADO/RADO work in the future. This is disappointing, as the country is missing an opportunity to build the anti-doping capacity in a coordinated way in Congo.

## **5. Recommendations**

Based on its observations and experiences, the IO team would like to make the following recommendations for future editions of the African Games:

- The African Union, as owner of the African Games, should take more ownership over the implementation of the doping control program. This may include having a representative on the Anti-Doping Sub-Commission (ADSC) of the Local Organizing Committee who has the authority to make decisions and hold the LOC accountable.
- The AU should ensure the LOC understands that the mandate of the ADSC is to complete all tasks related to the Doping Control Program, including finalizing all processes after the Games come to an end.

- The AU and the LOC should ensure that they invest in the training of individuals to do duty as part of the Anti-Doping Commission.
- The LOC should consider establishing the Anti-Doping Commission separately from the Medical Commission. This assists the ADC in functioning on its own and allows for direct support from the LOC.
- A clear internal structure of the ADSC should be developed and communicated, outlining the roles and responsibilities of each member of the ADSC, lines of reporting and decision making, etc.
- The AU should continue to engage key partners, including WADA, experienced NADOs and RADOs, and any other partner that can assist with the doping control program of the Games.
- A detailed project plan should be developed and implemented well in advance of the start of the Games. The LOC should be held accountable for ensuring everything is in place for the Doping Control Program for the Games, including accreditation, accommodation, transport and communication. The ADSC should also develop contingency plans in case certain arrangements are not in place.
- The daily testing schedule, including staffing assignments, should be developed and communicated in advance.
- As part of the Hosting Agreement, the AU should require the host country to hold sport competitions in the year (s) prior to the Games. These Test Events will allow the LOC, and in particular the ADSC, to conduct its activities and determine if everything is working well.
- Existing expertise and capacity in a country, including DCOs, TUEC and RMC, should be engaged and relied upon where possible.
- A clear policy for doping control personnel should be developed, communicated and agreed upon well in advance of the Games. In addition, the doping control personnel should be treated with respect, as they are one of the most important parts of an effective anti-doping program.
- A briefing session for all those involved in the doping control program should be conducted just before the start of the Games. This will ensure consistency and understanding amongst the entire doping control personnel.
- ADAMS should be used to manage all areas of the doping control program and a commitment is required to ensure all data, including doping control forms, are entered into the system on a daily basis.
- Results Management must be conducted in accordance with the World Anti-Doping Code. The process should be done in a timely manner, with decisions that are in line with the respective anti-doping rules of the Games and the Code.
- The AU and LOC must do a better job at ensuring countries, athletes and athlete support personnel are fully aware of the doping control program of the Games, including the anti-doping rules and the requirements for TUEs.
- The LOC should provide educational materials in the Doping Control Stations.
- More effort and focus should be put on building an anti-doping legacy within the host country of the Games. This includes working with the local NADO to ensure the doping control program for the Games contributes to the long term plans of the anti-doping authorities in the country.
- The AU should require all future hosts of the African Games to provide the same (or more) financial commitment to the doping control program.

## **6. Conclusions and Recommended next steps**

Unfortunately there is very little that can be taken as a positive from the doping control program implemented by COJA. Despite the support and assistance provided by WADA, the

IO team and SAIDS, the entire doping control program was, generally speaking, ineffective from the start. While the total number of tests conducted should be commended, the way in which it was achieved cannot. Every aspect of the doping control program could be improved, with a particular emphasis on proper planning, budgeting, communication and organization. The IO team hopes that the African Union will review this report in detail and work with WADA to ensure the same mistakes do not occur in future editions of the African Games.