



An Assessment of Good Governance in the All India Football Federation (AIFF)

Deiphibari Lyngdoh, Ph.D¹, Dr. V Ramesh Kumar², Dr. S Prem Kumar³

Research Scholar¹, Assistant Professor², Professor³

Department of Sports Management, Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University, Chennai, India

***Corresponding Author:** Deiphibari Lyngdoh, Ph.D, Research Scholar, Department of Sports Management, Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University, Chennai, India

Abstract: The aim of this research is to conduct a comprehensive evaluation on the level of Good Governance within the All India Football Federation (AIFF). Utilizing the National Sports Governance Observer (NSGO) tool, the study meticulously assesses AIFF's governance practices while identifying areas of strength and weaknesses. Notably, the dimensions of Transparency and Democracy emerge as a commendable aspect by receiving a positive score of 73% and 61% on the AIFF's governance framework; however, Internal Accountability and Societal Responsibility reveal room for improvement. The study's recommendations form a foundational roadmap to enhance AIFF's governance. By shedding light on AIFF's governance landscape and offering a strategic pathway for enhancement, this research underscores the vital significance of effective governance in sports organisation, contributing to the broader discourse on elevating governance standards within the domain of Football administration.

Keywords: Sports, Good Governance, Football, Sports Governance, Transparency, Democracy

1. INTRODUCTION

Football in India has a rich history and is deeply ingrained in the country's sporting culture. Introduced during British colonial rule in the 19th century, the sport quickly gained popularity and evolved into a passion shared by millions of Indians. Despite cricket's dominance, football maintains a dedicated following and continues to thrive at the grassroots level. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) governs the sport in the country, and has made notable strides in recent years, with a growing focus on youth development and international competitions, signaling a promising future for Indian football.

Indian football boasts a rich and enduring heritage as a widely celebrated spectator sport. It once held a prominent position in Asian football and made notable strides on the international stage. However, since the 1970s, the sport in India has encountered a complex array of challenges. In a determined effort to reinvigorate the game, the All India Football Federation announced its long-awaited "Vision 2047" during a press conference in New Delhi. This strategic roadmap, spanning 25 years, aspires to shape India into a footballing powerhouse by the nation's centenary year of independence. Developed in collaboration with various stakeholders within Indian football and incorporating insights from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and FIFA, the plan envisions India among the top four footballing nations in Asia, hosting premier leagues within the continent, and fostering a thriving football ecosystem. The unveiling of "Vision 2047" reflects a profound commitment to reviving the glory of Indian football and charting a dynamic course for its future. The objective lies in governing football with the utmost integrity and inclusivity, fostering teamwork and collaboration, and setting a paradigm for Good Governance. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) recognizes the imperative for effective governance, believing that it holds the key to elevating Indian Football to greater heights in the future.

Good governance, in this context, transcends choice and stands as a compelling necessity to attain excellence. Distinguished sporting organizations embrace a robust regulatory framework that safeguards the interests of stakeholders, ensures the integrity of sporting events, champions social and environmental responsibility, and enforces stringent controls over the allocation and utilization of

development funds. This approach not only adds value to the sport itself but also extends its positive impact to the broader community. The significance of adhering to principles of good governance in sports organizations is underscored by several compelling factors. The evolving landscape of sports, characterized by increasing commercialization, professionalization, and globalization, has amplified public and media scrutiny. Consequently, the need to address these issues and uphold good governance principles has become paramount in the world of sports.

1.1. Key Elements of AIFF's Governance Include

1. **Executive Committee:** The AIFF is governed by an Executive Committee, which consists of elected members responsible for making key decisions regarding football in India. This committee includes the President, Vice Presidents, and members representing various state associations and stakeholders in Indian football.
2. **General Body:** The General Body of the AIFF comprises representatives from state associations, football clubs, and other relevant bodies. It plays a crucial role in shaping the policies and direction of Indian football.
3. **Transparency:** Transparency is a fundamental principle of good governance within AIFF. The organization is expected to provide clear and open information about its activities, financial matters, and decision-making processes.
4. **Accountability:** AIFF is accountable for its actions and decisions. It is responsible for ensuring that funds allocated for football development are used appropriately and that the interests of stakeholders are protected.
5. **Stakeholder Engagement:** The AIFF engages with various stakeholders in Indian football, including players, coaches, referees, clubs, and fans, to gather input and involve them in decision-making processes.
6. **Compliance:** AIFF is expected to comply with its own statutes, rules, and regulations, as well as those of international football governing bodies like FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).
7. **Development Programs:** AIFF is responsible for implementing and managing development programs that promote the growth of football in India, including youth development, grassroots initiatives, and infrastructure development.
8. **Ethics and Fair Play:** Ensuring ethical conduct and fair play in Indian football is an integral part of AIFF's governance responsibilities. This includes addressing issues related to match-fixing, doping, and discrimination.
9. **Financial Oversight:** AIFF must manage its finances transparently and efficiently, ensuring that funds allocated for football development are utilized effectively and for their intended purposes.
10. **International Relations:** As the governing body for football in India, AIFF maintains relationships and collaborations with international football organizations like FIFA and AFC.

Effective governance is crucial for the continued growth and success of football in India. It helps maintain the integrity of the sport, ensures that resources are used effectively, and fosters a positive environment for players, fans, and all stakeholders involved in Indian football. AIFF's commitment to good governance principles is essential in achieving these goals and promoting the sport's development and excellence in the country.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sports as an activity are attracting the interest of millions of people worldwide. It is indeed, considered a universal activity that permeates every society at every corner of the world (Oketch, 2005). Governments worldwide have recognized the importance of the sector and have as such committed themselves to supporting the independence of these sports associations (Rogge, 2004). This support however is with the assumption that the sports associations observe proper governance principals. Sports federations must recognize that they influence to oversee their sport as trustees and the authority to oversee is essentially conferred in their associates and implemented by them

unswervingly and indirectly over an organization of depiction (Kings Report, 2004). In order to regulate the governance of sports, the formulation and enforcement of national policies on sports administration is mandatory (Oketch, 2005). Despite there being structures for the governance of sports federations in India, there are numerous challenges being faced in the operative and well-organized delivery of sports amenities in the country. Many of the employees working in the various federations as managers are not adequately trained in the various areas of sports governance and as such the federations suffer from inadequate management which ultimately leads to poor performance of the federations.

Good governance has generally meant that organization's policies and procedure are put in place to ensure that organization achieve their goals. According to Andanje et al. (2014), good governance is not all about rules and regulations but also an attitude in mind as well as the ethical culture of the organization and the behaviors of the people on the governing body. An organization is said to have good governance if they demonstrate transparency, accountability, participation and responsibility with all the involved stakeholders. Mardiasmo (2012) stated that when an organization is seen to be governed to a high standard, it promotes confidence amongst its stakeholders, leading to better and more ethical decision making and help in to meets their legislative responsibilities.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study takes a comprehensive approach by employing the National Sports Governance Observer (NSGO) tool as a fundamental benchmarking instrument to evaluate the governance quality within the All-India Football Federation (AIFF). The NSGO tool is specifically designed to assess and score the performance of individual sports organizations, covering a total of 46 unique principles related to good governance. These principles are spread across four distinct dimensions: Transparency (7 Principles), Democracy (13 Principles), Internal Accountability and control (14 Principles), and Societal Responsibility (12 Principles). In order to meticulously scrutinize the governance practices, the researcher adopted a document analysis methodology, characterized by an in-depth examination of pertinent materials. The data collection process primarily consisted of desktop research, encompassing a thorough analysis of the AIFF's official websites, governing statutes, internal regulations, and any other pertinent documents that were readily available for analysis. It is essential to highlight that the scoring procedure relied exclusively on publicly accessible data, ensuring a rigorous and objective assessment. Therefore, the researcher leveraged the pre-existing National Sport Governance Observer survey tool developed by Play the Game as the foundational framework for evaluating governance practices within the AIFF. This choice was predicated on its applicability and suitability within the Indian sports context, given the AIFF's organizational structure and statutes, which align closely with the parameters of the assessment tool.

Furthermore, the selection of the NSGO tool was driven by the pragmatic consideration that it aligns harmoniously with the inherent structures and regulatory frameworks present within the Indian sports ecosystem. Consequently, this assessment tool emerged as a judicious choice for gauging and comprehending the governance landscape within the AIFF, ensuring the research's relevance and reliability in the context of the Indian sports milieu.

To quantify the results for each indicator, the survey employs the following scoring scales:

Not relevant	Not fulfilled	Weak	Moderate	Good	Very good
	0-19 %	20-39 %	40-59 %	60-79 %	80-100 %

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table1. NSGO Index Score

Dimension	Score	Label
Transparency	73%	Good
Democracy	61%	Good
Internal Accountability and control	49%	Moderate
Societal responsibility	46%	Moderate
NSGO index total	57%	Moderate

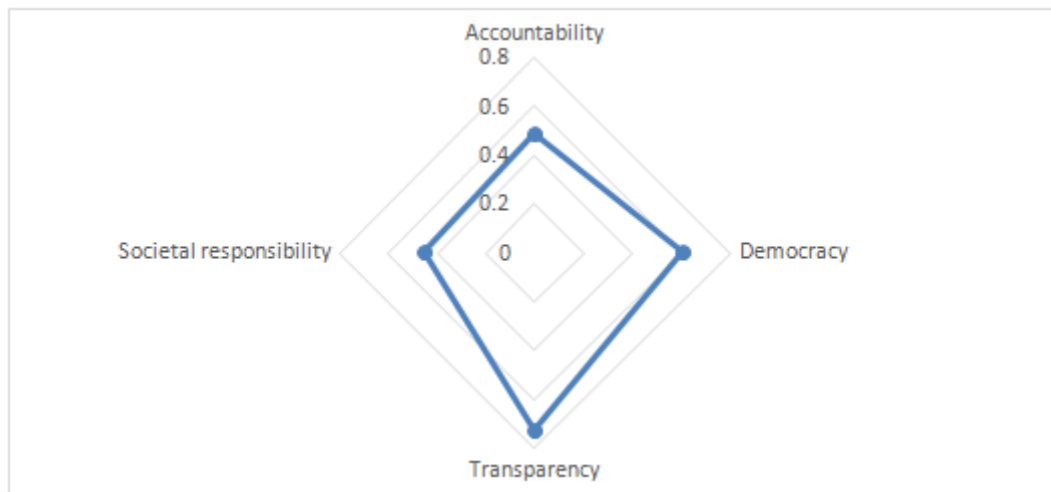


Figure1.

The results presented in the table and figure above shed light on the overall performance of good governance in the All India Football Federation (AIFF). As assessed by the National Sports Governance Observer (NSGO) tools, the AIFF attains an average NSGO index score of 57%, positioning it within the 'moderate' range of governance performance.

Delving deeper into the specific dimensions of governance, we observe a noteworthy pattern. The AIFF demonstrates a commendable level of governance in the areas of Transparency and Democracy, achieving a classification of 'Good' in these dimensions. Transparency, in particular, stands out as the strongest suit, boasting the highest score of 73%. This signifies that the AIFF excels in being open, clear, and accountable in its operations, a crucial aspect of good governance. Additionally, the Democracy dimension, with a score of 61%, reflects the extent to which the AIFF involves stakeholders and ensures a democratic decision-making process within its structure.

However, it is important to note that the AIFF's governance performance dips into the 'moderate' territory when we consider the Internal Accountability and Control as well as Societal Responsibility dimensions. In Internal Accountability and Control, the AIFF garners a score of 49%, indicating room for improvement in ensuring that it adheres to its internal rules and regulations effectively. Similarly, the Societal Responsibility dimension attains a score of 46%, suggesting that while the AIFF is making contributions to society, there is potential for enhancing its societal impact further.

In summary, these results provide valuable insights into the AIFF's governance landscape. While the organization exhibits strengths in transparency and democratic processes, there are areas within internal accountability and societal responsibility where efforts for improvement could lead to an even more robust governance framework. These findings offer a foundation for further exploration and refinement of governance practices within the AIFF to enhance its overall performance and impact on the Indian football landscape.

5. RECOMMENDATION

1. **Enhance Internal Accountability:** The AIFF should focus on strengthening its internal accountability mechanisms to ensure strict adherence to its governing statutes and regulations. Regular audits and oversight can facilitate this process.
2. **Promote Ethical Conduct:** Foster a culture of ethics and integrity within the organization to prevent any potential misconduct or unethical behaviour. This includes establishing a code of conduct and ethics training for staff and officials.
3. **Increase Stakeholder Engagement:** Continue to involve a wide range of stakeholders, including players, coaches, fans, and local communities, in decision-making processes to ensure a more democratic and inclusive approach to governance.
4. **Transparency in Decision-Making:** Maintain and improve the high level of transparency achieved in the Transparency dimension. Make sure that all decisions and financial information are easily accessible to the public.

5. **Societal Impact Initiatives:** Increase efforts in the Societal Responsibility dimension to enhance the AIFF's social impact. This could include more community outreach programs and partnerships with organizations dedicated to social causes.
6. **Professionalize Governance:** Invest in professional governance structures and practices, including employing qualified and experienced individuals in key administrative roles within the organization.
7. **Strategic Planning:** Develop a comprehensive strategic plan that outlines clear objectives, timelines, and performance indicators for the AIFF. Regularly review and adjust this plan to ensure it remains relevant and effective.
8. **Training and Development:** Invest in the training and development of AIFF personnel, including administrators, coaches, and referees, to ensure they are well-equipped to perform their roles effectively.
9. **Financial Transparency:** Maintain a high level of financial transparency, including detailed reporting of income and expenses. Regular financial audits by independent bodies can further enhance credibility.
10. **Benchmarking and Continuous Assessment:** Continue to use tools like SGO and NSGO to benchmark the AIFF's governance against international standards. Regularly assess and reassess governance practices to identify areas for improvement and track progress over time.

These recommendations aim to guide the AIFF toward further improvements in governance, transparency, and accountability, ultimately contributing to the development and success of football in India.

6. CONCLUSION

The evaluation of All India Football Federation (AIFF) governance through the National Sports Governance Observer (NSGO) index highlights a governance landscape marked by commendable transparency and democratic engagement, positioning the AIFF favorably in these critical dimensions. However, there is a clear need for bolstering internal accountability and societal responsibility. By heeding the recommendations for governance enhancement, the AIFF can embark on a path toward more robust and inclusive governance, reinforcing its pivotal role in fostering the development and success of football in India, benefiting both the sport and its diverse stakeholders.

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