



YOUTH SPORT EVENTS

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ORIGINAL TEXT IN ENGLISH

Much has been said about the Olympic Movement and its relevance to young people today. Last year, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) elected Singapore as host city for the inaugural Youth Olympic Games (YOG). As the host of the first YOG, Singapore has the privilege of co-constructing the Games with the IOC, particularly in the Culture and Education Programme (CEP).

The YOG, which place an equal emphasis on sport, culture and education, represent a shift in thinking and have presented us with an opportunity to do things differently. With this in mind, Singapore has envisioned Games that will inspire young people taking part in the sports programme, but even more so in the CEP.

I would like to say more about the CEP in this short presentation. The CEP is something untested, even by the IOC, quite unlike the Sports Programme, which the IOC has experienced from the Summer Olympic Games and has taken as the template for the YOG.

THE YOG SINGAPORE 2010 APPROACH

The Singapore 2010 YOG are about taking bold steps for young people. Through the Singapore 2010 YOG, we hope to change the way in which we engage with and view them. Instead of telling young people what they can or cannot do, we hope to create an environment where they receive support and are nurtured to fulfil their potential.

Young people today have diverse expectations and interests, as those of you who have teenage children can attest. Give them too much space, and they will say that they do not receive enough attention. And yet when we shower them with attention, it is sometimes misinterpreted as being too controlling and restrictive.

I believe that young people are like saplings – bursting with energy and passion, but also fragile and tender at the same time. In order to thrive, it is important that they receive just the right amount of sunlight, water and oxygen.

It may be difficult, but we need to strike a fine balance between giving our young people sufficient space to explore and make their own mistakes, and providing them with an adequate amount of guidance. With the right balance of support and faith, young people will be encouraged to contribute and develop their ideas, and learn to take responsibility for the decisions (and mistakes) that they make. Over time, our young people will develop the confidence and courage to champion their beliefs and values and make a positive impact in their communities.

It is for these reasons that the Singapore Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee (SYOGOC) has designed a holistic and integrated CEP that allows young people to express themselves and take ownership of their initiatives. The CEP is a new feature, altogether unlike the Sports Programme, which is basically the 26 sports from the Summer Games with some modifications in some events to suit our young athletes.

INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

Even in the various pre-YOG activities, for example, we have engaged and involved young people in the planning and implementation process, as in the case of Create Action Now! (CAN!), a series of themed festivals. CAN! was born when a team of passionate young people came together to organise an event in celebration of the launch of the Singapore 2010 YOG logo in January this year.

Through CAN!, young people in Singapore are invited to be active citizens in the community and be a part of the Singapore 2010 YOG spirit, be it as a volunteer, organiser or participant in the many events that celebrate the Singapore 2010 YOG.

The Million Deeds Challenge (MDC) is another pre-YOG initiative where we took what began as a simple idea by a group of students and transformed it into a call to action for everyone to be a part of the Olympic Movement. The MDC invites everyone to make a positive impact on the community by performing deeds of excellence, friendship and respect in their daily lives. The message here is that no act is too small and that, by taking the initiative and playing one's part, one can kick-start an entire movement and eventually effect a change in the community.

What really struck me, though, was the heartfelt thank-you letter that one of the students who was involved in the MDC launch sent to the Organising Committee after the event. I quote: "My team and I would love to thank you for your great support. This is the first time that we [have] enjoyed working with adults. You made us feel comfortable working with you guys... Our experiences working with adults (teachers) were bad, whatever they said went, and they didn't give us a chance to speak. But you guys let us have our say and that made us feel important."

It is moments like these that make you fully appreciate the power and significance of what we are trying to accomplish with the Singapore 2010 YOG. Indeed, our vision for the YOG is an ambitious one, especially given the two-year timeframe that we have. Then again, history has shown that it is with ambition that people achieve great things.

THE ASIAN YOUTH GAMES – A TEST EVENT

We hosted the inaugural Asian Youth Games (AYG) in Singapore from 30 June to 7 July 2009, and it served as a test Games. We tested not just seven sports and five venues, but also the processes, from



the arrival of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) teams to their departure, including accommodation and feeding, and the competition itself.

Even the CEP for the YOG was tested on the athletes participating in the AYG and, judging from the response we received from the participants, we are confident that we are on the right track. The young athletes were each given a passbook and, on completion of each activity, they received a stamp against the activity in their passbook. Depending on the number of stamps they received, the athletes could redeem collectibles. More than half of the athletes at the AYG redeemed collectibles. This was encouraging, given that the AYG were very short, lasting just seven days, and this was the first time these athletes had been asked to participate in a CEP.

CONCLUSION

What we are doing here is a tall order. By the time the first YOG wrap up next year, we hope to have been successful in inspiring and sowing the seeds of the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect in the young people of the world through the CEP. Through their participation in dialogue with Olympians, and the discovery workshops, community projects, art and culture programmes, island activities, world culture village and learning journeys of the CEP, I am confident that the YOG will make these athletes better athletes for tomorrow.

Singapore NOC is honoured to be a part of this Olympic journey as we embark on the remaining 313 days of preparations before the Games kick off on 14 August 2010. I urge you to join us on this journey as we spearhead a legacy for the future YOG.