



# Challenges for event volunteer programmes

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**Ronel Mitchell** reports on the planning and operation of volunteer programmes in Durban, South Africa during the 2010 FIFA World Cup and 2013 Orange Africa Cup of Nations football tournaments

**D**urban, which is situated on South Africa's eastern littoral, has positioned itself economically as an events-friendly city, with infrastructure and management organisations in place to host a wide range of sporting and other events. As part of the planning and preparation for hosting major international events such as the FIFA World Cup, the city has created a volunteers' programme that is intended to provide a readily available pool of well-trained staff who can support event organisers.



During the 2010 World Cup and at the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) 2013, the Durban volunteers played an important role in ensuring the safety and security of visiting fans, and the two events provide some useful lessons for the integration of volunteers with event planning processes.

Volunteers play an important part in supporting the professional safety and security structures provided by police, army, private security and venue officials. However, other than some documentation from the 2006 World Cup hosted in Germany, little reference material was available on which to base the design of the Durban host city volunteer project, and many procedures that were implemented in 2010 were developed from scratch by the organising committee.

International and national security cooperation mechanisms were established well before the 2010 FIFA World Cup began. Committees were formed to establish liaison and coordination between all of the safety and security bodies that might be called on, both nationally and locally (see Figure one). One role of the committees was to ensure that all of the relevant bodies were aware of the existing frameworks for handling risk at events, including legislation such as the Disaster Management Act, which is an integrated and coordinated disaster management policy and framework that focuses on preventing or reducing the risk of disasters, and includes guidelines for disaster management volunteers.

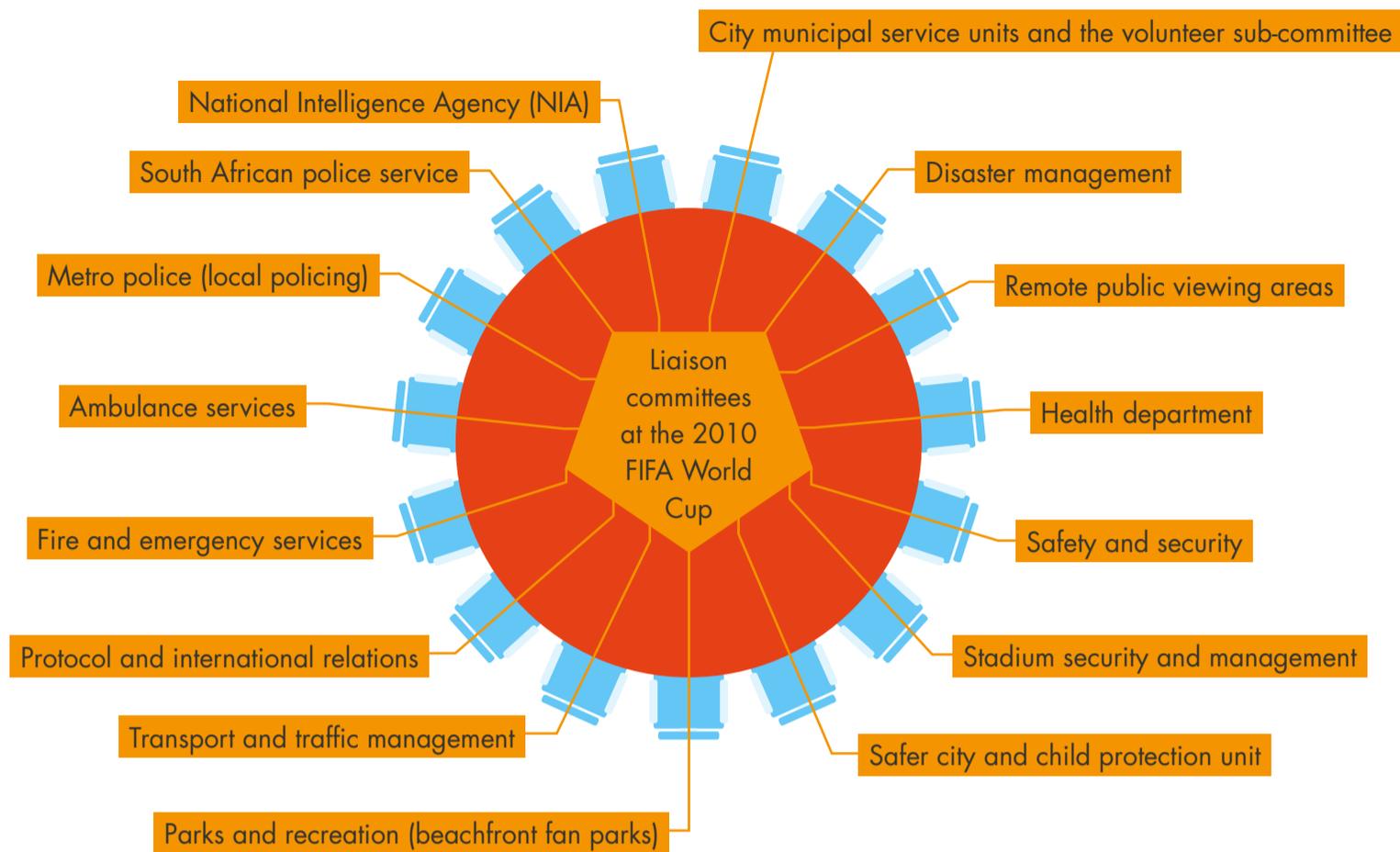
The host city volunteer programme complemented FIFA's own World Cup volunteers, and host city volunteers were deployed in a supportive role to the airport, remote public viewing areas, the Durban promenade and beachfront, shopping malls, tourist information kiosks and translator language support points, childminding areas, identified hotels, train, bus and taxi stations and in the stadium area, as well as other key strategic spots within the city. Due to the more than 1,200 city volunteers that were deployed during 2010, the host city volunteers were highly visible, and there was a good visitor-volunteer ratio, which helped to promote the perception of a safe and secure environment.

### **Volunteer expectations**

Durban has a high unemployment rate and suffers from considerable poverty levels. As a result, many of the volunteers wanted at least a minimal level of remuneration, and required a meal allowance and/or daily meals, uniforms and transport.

The two events covered in this article illustrate different dynamics and expectations among the volunteers. The World Cup 2010 host city volunteers were both highly motivated, excited and honoured to be part of the World Cup football tournament, while the AFCON 2013 volunteers displayed a greater desire to watch the games played in the stadium, and a number of selected host city volunteers were

**Figure one**



discontent being positioned at other deployment areas outside of the Durban stadium precinct. In fact, two sets of volunteers emerged, with AFCON volunteers deployed in the stadium precinct and host city volunteers being deployed for visibility and as a service to the public around the city. As a result of the differences in ability to view matches, the two groups did not work well together, and the primary focus of volunteerism was lost at times.

That said, most volunteers gave a great service to the public and spectators. The volunteers deployed to assist physically challenged fans to their seats were excellent, and were continually praised for their compassion and helpfulness. Most volunteers displayed good character, common decency and willingness to help.

### **Recruiting volunteers**

Considerable attention was paid to sourcing and recruiting volunteers. A meet-and-greet session was conducted with potential candidates who were then shortlisted to participate as host city volunteers. Command of English and knowledge of football were part of the criteria, as was a general aptitude for dealing with members of the public from varying backgrounds in a sympathetic fashion. All volunteers had to be over the age of 18 and in possession of a valid identification document, and no volunteers with criminal records were accepted.



## The host city volunteer programme complemented FIFA's own World Cup volunteers

The shortlisted volunteers were cleared through the NIA prior to being advised of their successful acceptance into the programme.

Any volunteer who had been shortlisted and was found to have a criminal record was removed from the list of applications. All information received from the NIA was confidential and not shared with any other persons.

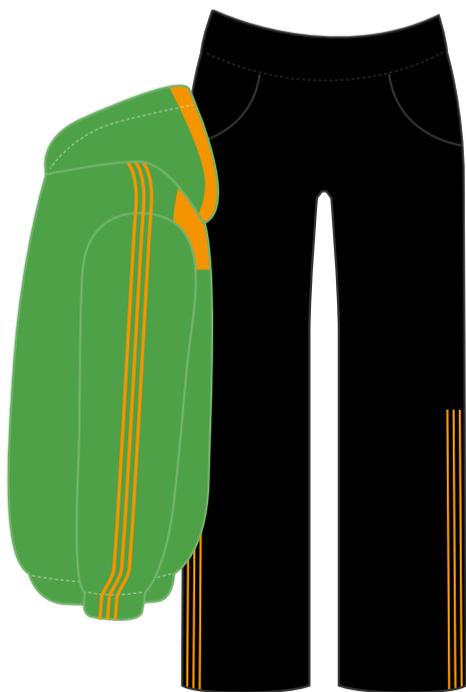
After the approval process, all the volunteers were issued with a *2010 Durban Host City Code of Conduct* manual. This document included a paragraph informing volunteers that they might be required to submit to inspections and body checks, and agree to the confiscation of items that were prohibited to carry or use while on duty as a Durban host city volunteer.

Accreditation of host city volunteers involved the recording of a volunteer's personal details and their area of deployment. In this way, host city volunteers were able to carry out their duties in secured areas, and identification was used for security purposes where applicable.

In the areas where personalised accreditation was unnecessary, host city volunteers were issued with standard host city volunteer accreditation. A volunteer's name and number were printed on the front of a badge and lanyard, while mobile numbers of the management team were recorded on the back. Photographic identification was put in place, and information of all successful volunteers was readily available on management laptops.

Thanks to the fast-growing benefits of modern mobile telephony, security back-up such as instant messaging allowed quick and efficient communication. Photo images of area challenges could be relayed through mobile phones to the venue operation centre almost immediately. Such modern technology has brought a valuable dynamic to safety and security checks, particularly in the context of volunteer groups. Once host city volunteers had registered they were allocated an area, which was registered on the computer management system, and sent out to the deployment areas identified. However, where the need arose volunteers could be moved rapidly to different deployment areas. Two daily shifts were operational that ensured volunteers were on duty at all times.

Host city volunteers were highly visible during the 2010 World Cup. Their tracksuits were adorned with reflective piping on the track pants in order to make them easily identifiable during night games



### Uniforms and identification

Host city volunteers were dressed in uniforms that distinguished them from the FIFA World Cup volunteers. Uniforms play a major part in safety and security, as they made the volunteers easy to identify among the mingling

crowds. The uniforms were branded with the wording 'Team Durban' and 'Host City Volunteer'. Volunteers' tracksuits also had reflective piping on track pants to make them easily identifiable during night games. The volunteers were required to wear their identification badges and lanyards at all times while on duty, and to return them to their managers at the end of each shift.

Volunteer training in the stadium was focused on offering spectators support to find seats and direct spectators to their correct seats. Training included being alert to any 'out of place' bags or suspicious behaviour, but volunteers did not perform the role of security staff.

Self-defence training and police seminars on drugs and child trafficking prior to the World Cup event ensured that volunteers were alert to identifying suspicious and unacceptable behaviour, abandoned bags and carrier packets. The volunteers were trained to make immediate mobile phone contact with their leader should any

suspicious behaviour be witnessed. To do this, all volunteers were issued with mobile phone airtime. As a further safety precaution, volunteers operated a buddy system, working in pairs. This was particularly relevant to those on promenade or car park duty. This worked well and at no time were volunteers working alone or without a buddy during their deployment shift.

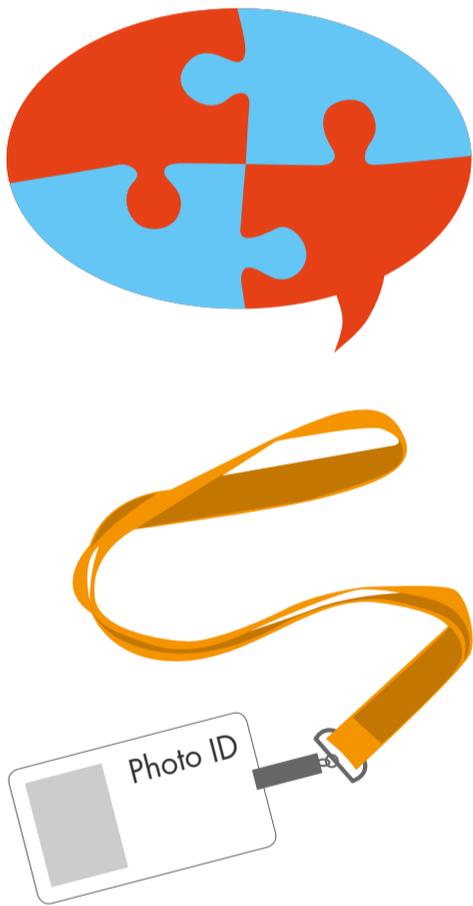
Language support volunteers also performed a valuable function during the World Cup. Translators ensured a smooth communication flow between foreign delegates and English-speaking locals. The language translators were contactable through mobile phones at all hours and this function was hugely successful.

Durban is a coastal city and holiday destination as well as an event centre. The beach is a popular area for fans, so volunteers were deployed to be highly visible on the promenade both day and night. On game days, volunteers formed teams and escorted fans to the stadium, walking beside spectators both to and from the game. Many Durban

hotels are situated along the beachfront and promenade, and the stadium is within walking distance of many of these hotels. The volunteers mingling with the crowds proved to be an excellent safety and security initiative. As an addition to normal duties, many host city volunteers went the extra mile in assisting visitors and residents throughout the event, singing, dancing and generally cultivating an atmosphere of fun.

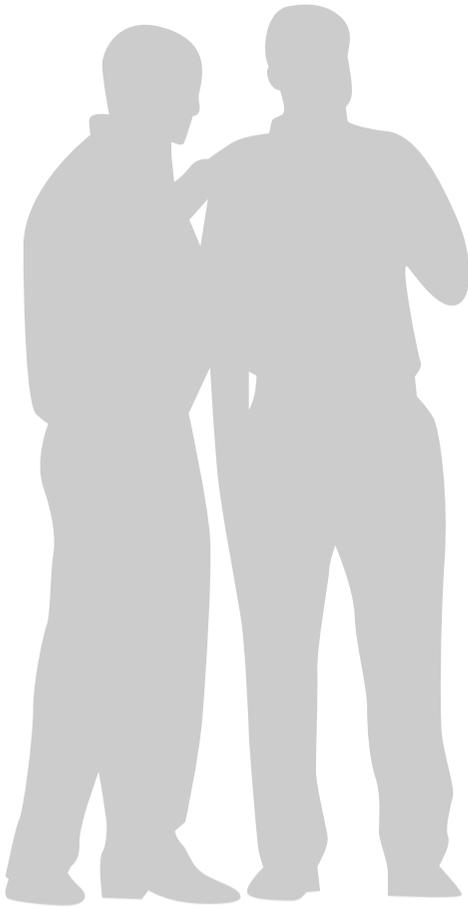
Managing volunteers, on shift 24/7, contributed in an inclusive and friendly manner to the success of the programme, in particular concerning safety and security. Volunteer leaders were in constant

Language support volunteers ensured smooth communications between foreign delegates and English-speaking locals. Translators were contactable through mobile phones at all times. The programme proved to be a big success



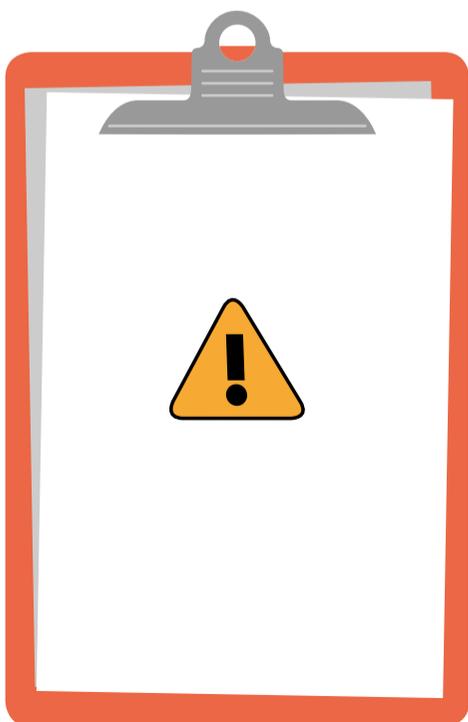
The volunteers were required to wear their identification badges and lanyards at all times while on duty





At no time were volunteers working alone, or without a buddy, during their deployment shift

Self-defence training and police seminars on drugs and child trafficking prior to the World Cup event helped keep volunteers alert to suspicious and unacceptable behaviour, abandoned bags and carrier packets



contact with the venue operation centre and the volunteers' base. Volunteer programme management staff visited deployment areas regularly to check and ensure visitors, fans and foreign delegates, football supporters, hotel delegates, FIFA officials and visiting tour groups were communicated with, and assisted where necessary. They also checked that the volunteers were supplying a service to the visiting public in a friendly, respectful and caring manner.

Through the mobile phone system, messaging and modern technology, volunteer management were at hand to solve any challenges at short notice. The team leaders and volunteers were the extra eyes and ears for the security officials, police and disaster management teams. Each day, twice a day, volunteer management reported to the disaster management headquarters for briefings and to discuss any challenges or safety issues.

It is important to underline the fact that volunteers did not play the role of safety and security personnel. Any challenges were relayed immediately to higher authority in the mainstream safety and security function. The volunteer headquarters were open at all times to metro police and all policing staff, including fire and emergency. Open and transparent communication and integrity proved to be of paramount importance to smooth operations.

The volunteer management team stayed at the host city volunteer headquarters, located in a Durban beachfront hotel situated 2.5 kms from the stadium, for the duration of the 2010 World Cup, which took place in June and July. This ensured that duty staff were available at any time of day or night, and volunteer management meetings could be held late at night to discuss the following day's operational plans and report any challenges from the day's shifts.

### **The AFCON 2013 experience**

Durban was also a host city for the 2013 AFCON football tournament. 700 volunteers were engaged to participate, comprising 500 AFCON volunteers and 200 Durban host city volunteers. Students, unemployed youth and retired persons were included in the programme and application forms as per previous criteria for pre-selection were completed. While AFCON is sponsored by Orange, the AFCON volunteer programme also included Adidas-sponsored apparel such as shoes, socks, t-shirts, caps, jackets and bags for the volunteers.

At the various training and motivation sessions volunteers displayed an eagerness and attended the training regularly. The training and motivation sessions included a presentation



All volunteers were issued with mobile phone airtime



Through the mobile phone system, messaging and modern technology, the volunteer management team were at hand to solve any challenges quickly

on the AFCON tournament, customer service and stadium knowledge and orientation.

The volunteer programme headquarters for both AFCON and host city volunteers was established at Badminton Hall in Durban, directly next to the Moses Mabhida railway station and a short walk from the Durban Moses Mabhida football stadium, making transport and access to the facility easier for volunteers.

Accreditation procedures were similar to those used during the World Cup. Volunteers had to undergo a security check and vetting by the NIA. In the areas where personalised accreditation was unnecessary, such as promenade pedestrian routes and parking area deployment, host city volunteers were issued with standard host city volunteer accreditation.

Stadium spectator services volunteer deployment was activated for all Durban match days. AFCON volunteers were accredited to perform their deployment duties inside the stadium as ushers and ticketing volunteers, while Durban host city volunteers were deployed along the beachfront, around the stadium precinct and at other points around the city.

The stadium volunteers were challenged by the overselling of tickets during the AFCON tournament, and seats were even sold where tickets or seats did not exist, which enraged spectators and put both security personnel and the volunteers under pressure. Volunteer management and stadium security personnel were continuously assisting spectators to find alternative seating. This was a stadium and ticketing service provider issue, and was later resolved.

### Lessons learnt

The volunteer programmes for the 2010 World Cup and AFCON 2013 were generally very successful, and contributed to a positive environment during the tournaments. However, as is the case with all events, some improvements can be identified.

Managing two sets of volunteers in one venue was not conducive to the Durban AFCON volunteer programme. The volunteer groups' uniforms were different; one group received certain apparel, whereas the other group did not, and some of the sponsored apparel arrived very late into the AFCON programme. These issues produced some friction between the two groups of volunteers and presented challenges in managing the event.

The need for not only early planning but also flexibility cannot be overstated. Plans need to be adjusted according to the on-the-ground tempo, and the ability to be responsive in this manner to ensure that the safety and success of an event is more important than sticking to hard and fast rules when an event is operational. ■

**Ronel Mitchell was the host city volunteer programme manager for Durban during the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the 2013 AFCON tournament**