



The SIGA Universal Standards and SIRVS: Driving the Evolution of the Sport Industry



Katie Simmonds
GLOBAL COO, SIGA |
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
SIGA WOMEN

Can we begin with an overview of SIGA and its reform agenda?

KATIE SIMMONDS - I am passionate about SIGA and its' Reform Agenda, as it's a project I've been working on since its inception for the last seven years. SIGA is a concept whose time has come.

Taking a step back, looking at the Sport Industry over the last decade, we can see that there has been various crises of public confidence and trust. Sport has been on the front pages for corruption and money laundering, tax evasion, sexual abuse of athletes and other examples.



Frank Lee
SIRVS TECHNICAL LEAD

SIGA is a global multi-stakeholder coalition of like-minded organisations that bring together all sides of the Sport Industry to push for Sport Integrity to prevent these cases from happening.

We do that through a set of Universal Standards on Sport Integrity. They cover four key areas: **Good Governance in Sport, Financial Integrity and Transparency, Sport Betting Integrity** and **Youth Development and Protection**. The standards are not created from thin air, they are a result of task forces with the contribution of high-level experts and are based on the language used for international standard setting

and corporate best practice, tailored to the industry.

Significantly, these standards are not to be kept in a draw, they have been created to be implemented. The crux of SIGA's reform agenda is to bring accountability to the industry, and we do that through the SIGA Independent Rating and Verification System otherwise known as SIRVS. SIRVS is a service to the Sport Industry. It's a positive effort to enhance standards across the world of Sport, to safeguard its values, to ensure a viable and sustainable industry that is worthy of the public's trust. There's been international standards for many different sectors across different years. But it is new for Sport, and the reason why it is new for Sport is that Sport has been left to autonomously govern itself.

Frank, you have over 30 years of experience in setting the standards for a wide variety of industries. Can you please share your perspective on why setting industry standards and independent certification is vital for the Sport Industry?

FRANK LEE - I think that setting industry standards and independent certification is vital for all industries, not just for Sport.

During my extensive career, I have performed a wide variety of different roles, both technical, operational and commercial, working on a wide range of certification schemes in sectors including aerospace, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, personal protective equipment, construction materials, electrical safety, bus governance, general governance and quality, health, safety and environmental management in a wide range of industries, including chemicals, oil and gas and all sorts of services and manufacturing sectors.



I've had a lot of experience to understand how important good governance is, and what it brings to an organisation. And all those industries have one thing in common: the need to provide confidence to clients, customers, regulators and end users, the general public, about the performance and integrity of the products and services they provide. This is largely achieved by good operational governance, which is the foundation of all integrity-based assurance that you come across.

You need four key elements for a good governance system: systems, process, competence, and culture. When you look at recent issues in the Sport sector, culture has been a common failure, and culture is driven by leadership and underpinned by systems, processes, and competencies within any organisation. Standards set the bar. I have to say self-assessment simply does not work. It lacks rigour, allows people to use excuses as reasons not to do things or to continue doing the wrong things.

The status quo cannot prevail in situations where conflicts of interest exist, or boards are not democratically elected.

In terms of the SIRVS process, it's about continuous improvement. SIGA is not in the business of rating organisations and walking away. We're in the business of supporting organisations on their governance journeys and we do that through different means. We offer three services to the Sport Industry to get them match fit ready for SIRVS.

How does SIRVS ensure impartiality and independence in the verification process?

FL - Independence in any certification process is the fundamental cornerstone. That's why I talked earlier about self-assessment not having the rigour that's required. So, what we do here is that all the auditors are impartial and independent of both organisations (SIGA and the stakeholder). We train all auditors and then we have in place a clearly defined scheme that sets out the consistent rules globally for the deployment of the global SIRVS scheme. It doesn't matter where in the world you are; the rules are the same. The auditors are trained to the same standard and they are always independent of all the organisations, and



any of the processes that have been undertaken previously.

The scheme clearly defines rules in relation to the findings and their categorisation. Once the audit has been conducted and the auditor has made a recommendation, a complete independent review of that recommendation and the basis for it is made by an independent person before the final decision is made. We also have an appeals process. If there's a problem with a finding or a categorization, then someone independent of the actual audit process can look at that appeal and make a judgement. This ensures there is integrity and impartiality at every stage, supported by a globally consistent process for undertaking and managing the whole audit process from start to finish. And that's the key thing here. Findings in Brazil will be the same as a finding in Japan. The duration of an assessment in Argentina will be the same as the duration of the second in France. Everything is consistent throughout and that's the key to making sure that it's impartial and independent.

How do Sport Organisations prepare and initiate the SIRVS certification process?

KS - We've tried to make it as user-friendly and collaborative as possible and designed the system to be time efficient and streamlined.

If a Sport Organisation is interested in SIRVS, they complete an application form, with information including the size of the organisation, the number of key personnel dealing with governance, what SIRVS services they're interested in, how many offices they have, their preferred language to conduct the audit, whether virtual or in person. SIGA

then provides a quotation of the costs based on the duration of the audit and the Sport Organisation enters a contract with SIGA. We would then present a checklist of documents that would give guidance and framework for the Sport Organisation.

Typically, a Sport Organisation will look at the document checklist and will indicate when they are ready to go through Stage 1 of SIRVS. It could be six weeks or six months from then. We leave that up to the Sport Organisation to decide and they need to have the documents ready to present to the auditor. There is no requirement to send the documents in advance as the audit is a dialogue, not a tick the box.

The rating is tiered and is incremental: Bronze, Silver and Gold, the equivalent of Good Better and Best and lasts for three years with an annual top up in years two and three.

What benefits can Sport Organizations expect to gain from achieving SIRVS certification?

KS - There are several benefits, including reducing risk and safeguarding, providing confidence to the stakeholders, protecting reputations of the Sport Organisations. It also protects the reputations of the sponsors and any governments that invest in the Sport. The SIRVS Programme supports social diversity and sustainability issues, which are key criteria of the Good Governance standards.

It demonstrates due diligence to fans and investors. It makes Sport Organisations better prepared for the unexpected and provides a platform that gives Sport a positive relationship with govern-

SIRVS: AUDIT OPTIONS

Recognising that Sports organisations are at various stages of their governance journey, SIGA has developed the following audit options:

1. TRAINING ON SIRVS

SIGA will organise with its independent audit team either a virtual or in person training on SIRVS. This involves explaining in detail how the audit process works, the criteria for each level and tips and advice on how your sports organisation can get match fit for SIRVS and start implementing the processes and procedures to score your highest possible SIRVS rating.

2. GAP ANALYSIS AUDIT

SIGA and its independent audit team will conduct either an in person or virtual audit that identifies the gaps in your sports organisations' systems and processes. This solution is collaborative and provides an in-depth post audit report including a corrective action plan to support your organisations' journey to achieve minimum bronze level standard or support you to go for gold! This process is confidential between SIGA, its trained auditors and the Sport Organisation.

3. FULL SIRVS AUDIT

Stage 1, followed by Stage 2 within 4 months of each other.



ments and regulators. To quote David Butler, the General Manager of the European Rugby League Federation, the first Sport Organisation to adopt and implement the good governance standards and go through SIRVS, he now knows what excellence looks like.

What support does SIRVS provide to sports organisations to enhance their integrity?

FL - The Gap Analysis can highlight areas of concern, gaps in the governance system that Sport Organisations might have in place. SIRVS doesn't do consultancy. We won't come and implement a system for you. In my view, that doesn't work because you don't own that system if someone implements it for you. I've seen that done on many occasions. Plus, there's an enormous impartiality issue for us if we were to implement and then assess. We can provide and help you in your capacity building, your capacity to manage and run and implement a good effective governance system. We can help you gain the skills to help you implement your own system and to deploy effectively,

through training your internal audit process. And we can do it through mentoring some of your people and helping to transfer some of the skills from all the sectors that have applied good governance to improve what they do and to reduce their overall corporate risk.

How does SIRVS promote Sport Integrity and how does it impact on broader industry stakeholders, such as sponsors and fans?

KS - This goes back to the DNA of SIGA. We are a multi stakeholder coalition bringing all sides of the industry together: the Sport Organisations, global business, international organisations, civil society, and the governments as well. The global business community can play a huge role in positively creating a new culture of compliance which mirrors their own standards that they are currently being held to account to by the consumers. There's always a question: why would a sponsor that you know from a financial industry, from an insurance industry that obviously adheres to international standards, sponsor a Sport Organ-

isation that doesn't meet their own standards? I think this is a critical question and to date there has been nothing in the industry to support sponsors have a metric of that risk analysis. The SIRVS system does that for them.

The ultimate recipient of SIRVS is the Sport Organisations. They are going to go through the system, they are going to pay to go through SIRVS and invest in their team. But the benefit is not just confined to Sport. All those that invest in the industry, governments, and sponsors, also benefit. That's why Mastercard is a member of our community from day one when we first founded SIGA back in 2017. Ultimately the change we are seeking is to create a level playing field amongst the sponsors, so that when they go to sponsor Sport Organisations, there's an integrity standard that they will require the Sport to go through. The SIRVS programme could be over a transitional period of one to three years, for example, but that really protects their reputation.

The last thing we want is for sponsors to walk away. We want the industry to continue to thrive financially and in terms of social impact, remember the reason why sponsors sponsor Sport is because Sport is like no other industry. It captures the hearts, and minds of people from around the world. It breaks barriers. It breaks boundaries and unites the community around us.

We want the Sport Industry to continue to thrive, and the rating system is a way to do that. And let's not forget the fans: the fans now are not the same fans we were when younger. They are more demanding, the young fans and the young consumers. They want to support organisations, whether it's Sport or products, manufacturing goods that stand for something, that stand for their values. If they don't, they will walk away. So that is what we want to prevent from happening and SIRVS is the tool to do that.

What does the future hold for SIRVS and the Sport Industry?

KS - To predict the future, let's look back. There was a vacuum in terms of international standards for the world of Sport. SIGA has created those

standards, tailored them to the industry and amended them to reflect evolving best practice. Simultaneously SIGA created a global movement of like-minded organisations, and we are growing that membership base on a daily basis. We've created the standards; we then carefully created the SIRVS rating system. In a very difficult time during COVID we adapted that for virtual implementation and the European Rugby League was a pioneer. This year the first Professional Football League in the world, the Portuguese Football League, went through SIRVS and we are currently working with about 20 Sport Organisations that are various places in terms of the process.

This year we translated the standards into Portuguese, and we have interest from Brazil to go through SIRVS. The team's aspiration is to translate the SIGA standards into French and Spanish, and other languages, as the demand continues to grow.

There is a huge need for SIRVS in the world, and we will be growing our global audit team accordingly. We now are actively working on securing key Sport Organisations in different geographical areas and we invite Sport Organisations to join the movement and lead the change.

FL - The world is an uncertain place, and the only thing I can say to anyone with any certainty about what will happen in the future is that it's uncertain. The best thing you can do for your organisation to protect your stakeholders, your shareholders and your reputation is to implement good governance systems if you're an organisation, and to ensure that those organisations that you associate your brand with are operating good governance systems for you, so that when unexpected things happen, you are able to quickly mitigate them. If you do that, I think your organisation will be better equipped to deal with any situations, any unexpected circumstances that come along. So, I think the future for SIRVS is a bright one. I think many more organisations will adopt these standards and they will become the global norm.

For more information on SIRVS, contact info@siga-sport.com