

# women 2000 and beyond



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## Women, gender equality and sport



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## Introduction

*"Bicycling has done more to emancipate women than any one thing in the world"*

—Susan B. Anthony, suffragist, 1896

Women's participation in sport has a long history. It is a history marked by division and discrimination but also one filled with major accomplishments by female athletes and important advances for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Among the many remarkable achievements are those of Helene Madison of the United States of America, the first woman to swim the 100-yard freestyle in one minute at the 1932 Olympics; Maria-Teresa de Filippis of Italy, the first woman to compete in a European Grand Prix auto race in 1958; Nawal El Moutawakel of Morocco, the first woman from an Islamic nation to win an Olympic medal for the 400-metre hurdles at the 1984 Olympics; and Tegla Loroupe of Kenya, who in 1994 became the first African woman to win a major marathon.<sup>1</sup> Women have taken up top leadership positions in sport, such as Presidents and Secretaries-General of National Olympic Committees. More and more women have also taken up employment opportunities in all areas of sport, including as coaches, managers, officials and sport journalists.

These achievements were made in the face of numerous barriers based on gender discrimination. Women were often perceived as being too weak for sport, particularly endurance sports, such as marathons, weightlifting and cycling, and it was often argued in the

past that sport was harmful to women's health, particularly their reproductive health. In 1896, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, stated: "No matter how toughened a sportswoman may be, her organism is not cut out to sustain certain shocks."<sup>2</sup> Such stereotypes fuelled gender-based discrimination in physical education and in recreational and competitive sport, sporting organizations and sport media.

## The benefits for women and girls of physical activity and sport

Although many of the clinical trials and epidemiological studies in health research have excluded women, the data available suggest that women derive many health benefits from an active lifestyle.<sup>3</sup> The health benefits of women's participation in physical activity and sport are now well established. Participation in sport and physical activity can prevent a myriad of noncommunicable diseases which account for over 60 per cent of global deaths, 66 per cent of which occur in developing countries.<sup>4</sup> For girls, it can have a positive impact on childhood health, as well as reduce the risk of chronic diseases in later life.

For older women, it can contribute to the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, which account for one third of deaths among women around the world and half of all deaths among women over 50 in developing countries.<sup>5</sup> Physical activity also helps to reduce the effects of osteoporosis, which women

have a higher risk of developing than men.<sup>6</sup> Participation in physical activity aids in the prevention and/or treatment of other chronic and degenerative diseases associated with aging, such as type-2 diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, osteoporosis and cardiovascular abnormalities. It also helps in the management of weight and contributes to the formation and maintenance of healthy bones, muscles and joints. Physical activity can reduce the incidence of falls among older women.

An important role of physical activity in the life of older women lies in prolonging independence. Much of the physical decline that was presumed an inevitable consequence of aging is now thought to be the result of inactivity. While no one can guarantee that exercise will prolong life, it can enhance the quality of life for older women who value their independence.<sup>7</sup>

The benefits for women and girls with disabilities are also well established. It has been noted that sport provides a double benefit to women with disabilities by providing affirmations of self-empowerment at both personal and collective levels.<sup>8</sup> Apart from enhancing health, wellness and quality of life, participation in physical activity and sport develops skills such as teamwork, goal-setting, the pursuit of excellence in performance and other achievement-oriented behaviours that women and girls with disabilities may not be exposed to in other contexts.<sup>9</sup>

Participation in sport and physical activity can also facilitate good mental health for women of all ages, including the management of mental disorders such as Alzheimer's disease.<sup>10</sup> It can promote psychological well-being through building self-esteem, confidence and social integration, as well as help reduce stress, anxiety, loneliness and depression. This is particularly important as rates of depression among women are almost double those of men in both developed and developing countries.<sup>11</sup> Adolescent girls in particular are vulnerable to anxiety and depressive disorders and are significantly more likely than boys to

have seriously considered suicide by the age of 15.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to improvements in health, women and girls stand to gain specific social benefits from participation in sport and physical activity. Sport provides women and girls with an alternative avenue for participation in the social and cultural life of their communities and promotes enjoyment of freedom of expression, interpersonal networks, new opportunities and increased self-esteem. It also expands opportunities for education and for the development of a range of essential life skills, including communication, leadership, teamwork and negotiation.

Inactive adults can rapidly improve their health and well-being by becoming moderately active on a regular basis. Physical activity need not be strenuous to achieve health benefits and it is never too late to gain benefits.<sup>13</sup>

### *The benefits of women's participation for sport and society*

In addition to benefits for women and girls themselves, women's increased involvement can promote positive development in sport by providing alternative norms, values, attitudes, knowledge, capabilities and experiences. The contributions of women, particularly in leadership positions, can bring diversity and alternative approaches and expand the talent base in areas such as management, coaching and sport journalism.

The participation of women and girls in sport challenges gender stereotypes and discrimination, and can therefore be a vehicle to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In particular, women in sport leadership can shape attitudes towards women's capabilities as leaders and decision-makers, especially in traditional male domains. Women's involvement in sport can make a significant contribution to public life and community development.

## **Inequalities and discrimination: constraining women in sport**

The positive outcomes of sport for gender equality and women's empowerment are constrained by gender-based discrimination in all areas and at all levels of sport and physical activity, fuelled by continuing stereotypes of women's physical abilities and social roles. Women are frequently segregated involuntarily into different types of sports, events and competitions specifically targeted to women. Women's access to positions of leadership and decision-making is constrained from the local level to the international level. The value placed on women's sport is often lower, resulting in inadequate resources and unequal wages and prizes. In the media, women's sport is not only marginalized but also often presented in a different style that reflects and reinforces gender stereotypes. Violence against women, exploitation and harassment in sport are manifestations of the perceptions of men's dominance, physical strength and power, which are traditionally portrayed in male sport.

A number of critical elements have been identified for challenging gender discrimination and unequal gender relations, and establishing an enabling environment for gender equality and the empowerment of women, in many different areas, including women and sport. They include improving women's capabilities, through education and health; increasing their access to and control over opportunities and resources, such as employment and economic assets; enhancing their agency and leadership roles; protecting and promoting their human rights; and ensuring their security, including freedom from violence.

The role of men and boys in challenging and changing unequal power relations is critical. In recent years, a stronger focus has developed on the positive role men and boys can and do play in promoting women's empower-

ment in many different areas, including in the home, the community and the labour market. The current dominance of men in the world of sport makes their involvement and contributions to achieving gender equality in this area critical.

This publication explores the power of sport and physical education to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It examines persistent inequalities and challenges to equal participation and benefits for women and girls, as well as ways to address them. Examples of good practices are provided in all areas. The report outlines recommendations for action in the areas of research, policy and operational activities.

### **The United Nations human rights and sport for development and peace framework**

*"The practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right for all."*

—UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, article 1

A rights-based understanding of sport and physical activity has been present since the founding of the United Nations. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set out a framework of rights and duties and recognized that "Everyone has the right to rest and leisure . . ." (article 24); "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality . . ." (article 26); and "Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community . . ." (article 27).<sup>14</sup>

Sport and physical activity were first specifically recognized as a human right in the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, adopted in 1978 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Charter states: "One of the essential conditions for the effec-

tive exercise of human rights is that everyone should be free to develop and preserve his or her physical, intellectual, and moral powers, and that access to physical education and sport should consequently be assured and guaranteed for all human beings.”<sup>15</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, also supports the notion of sport and physical education as a human right. In article 29 (1), States parties agreed that the education of the child shall be directed to “the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”.<sup>16</sup>

The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006 marked a significant step forward in the policy framework on sport for people with disabilities. The Convention affirms the right of persons with disabilities to participate in mainstream and disability-specific sporting activities at all levels and to have equal access to training, resources, venues and services. It also affirms the right of children with disabilities to have equal access to recreation and sporting activities, including those in the school system.<sup>17</sup> The specific focus on equality between women and men and women with disabilities in this new Convention will benefit women and girls in sport.<sup>18</sup>

Over the past decade, there has been a growing understanding that access to and participation in sport and physical education is not only a right in itself, but can also be used to promote a number of important development goals through facilitating democratic principles, promoting leadership development, and encouraging tolerance and respect, as well as providing access to opportunities and social networks. All areas of development can be influenced by sport, including health, education, employment, social inclusion, political development and peace and security.

Sport has the potential to contribute to the achievement of each of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in unique and

creative ways. Women play an integral role in the achievement of every MDG, and every MDG is vital to gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In 2002, the Secretary-General convened the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace to encourage a more coherent approach to the use of sport-related initiatives in the pursuit of development goals, particularly at the community

level, and to promote the use of sport as a recognized tool in development. The Task Force report *Sport as a tool for development and peace: Towards achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals* provides an overview of the growing role that sport activities play in many United Nations policies and programmes and summarizes the lessons learned. The report concludes that sport programmes must

## Sport and the MDGs

**Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.** Providing development opportunities will help fight poverty. The sport industry, as well as the organization of large sporting events, creates opportunities for employment. Sport provides life skills essential for a productive life in society. The opportunity to acquire such skills is often more limited for women, making their access to sport of critical importance.

**Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education.** Sport and physical education are an essential element of quality education. They promote positive values and skills that have an immediate and lasting impact on young people. Sport activities and physical education generally make school more attractive and improve attendance.

**Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.** Increasing access for women and girls to physical education and sport helps build confidence and promotes stronger social integration. Involving girls in sport activities alongside boys can help overcome prejudice that often contributes to social vulnerability of women and girls.

**Goals 4 and 5: Reduce child mortality and improve maternal health.** Sport can be an effective means to provide women with a healthy lifestyle as well as to convey important messages on a wide range of health issues.

**Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.** Sport can help engage otherwise difficult-to-reach populations and provide positive role models delivering prevention messages. The most vulnerable populations, including women and girls, are highly responsive to sport-targeted programmes. Sport can also effectively assist in overcoming prejudice, stigma and discrimination.

**Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.** Sport is ideal for raising awareness about the need to preserve the environment. The interdependency between the regular practice of outdoor sports and the protection of the environment is clear.

**Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development.** Sport offers diverse opportunities for innovative partnerships for development and can be used as a tool to build and foster partnerships between developed and developing nations to work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

*Source:* Adapted from International Year of Sport and Physical Education (2005). *A year of sports*. Available from [http://www.un.org/sport2005/a\\_year/mill\\_goals.html](http://www.un.org/sport2005/a_year/mill_goals.html)

be based on the “sport for all” model, ensuring that all groups are given the opportunity to participate, particularly those who gain additional benefits, such as women, persons with disabilities and young people.<sup>19</sup>

In 2004, the General Assembly adopted resolution 58/5, “Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace”, which invited Governments, the United Nations, the specialized agencies, where appropriate, and sport-related institutions to work collectively so that sport and physical education could present opportunities for solidarity and cooperation, in order to promote a culture of peace and social and gender equality and to advocate dialogue and harmony. It recognized the power of sport to contribute to human development and proclaimed the year 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education.

The International Year aimed to facilitate better knowledge-sharing among different key stakeholders, raise awareness and create the right conditions for the implementation of more sport-based human development programmes. It provided a unique opportunity to use the power of sport to mobilize individuals, organizations and local communities, drawing together diverse groups in a positive and supportive environment. During the International Year, over 100 international initiatives and thousands of local projects were undertaken by Governments, the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. An unprecedented amount of media attention was accorded to the issue of sport and physical education. The notion of “sport for all” was emphasized and the principle of non-discrimination was upheld as a fundamental human right.

In 2006, Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace, which was included in his report on “Sport for Development and Peace: the way forward”.<sup>20</sup> The

action plan serves as an initial road map for a three-year period to expand and strengthen partnerships, sport for development and peace programmes and projects, as well as advocacy and communications activities. The plan calls for the development of a global framework to strengthen a common vision, define priorities and further raise awareness to promote and mainstream easily replicable sport for development and peace policies. It also calls for promoting innovative funding mechanisms and voluntary arrangements, including the engagement of sport organizations, civil society, athletes and the private sector.

### Policy/normative frameworks on women, gender equality and sport

*“States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of women and men, the same rights, in particular . . . [t]he rights to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.”*

—Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (article 13)

Within the established framework of human rights and sport for development and peace, a number of United Nations intergovernmental and treaty body processes, as well as other international and regional processes, have specifically addressed some of the critical gender equality issues in sport and physical education. Global and regional policy/normative frameworks on women, gender equality and sport have been developed.

These policy/normative frameworks have laid the foundation for a just and equitable world of sport for women and men. They have also recognized the power of sport as a catalyst for social and economic development. Imple-

mentation of these commitments has begun in all regions, and has resulted in real and tangible progress for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. However, the implementation of the frameworks continues to be constrained by gender-based discrimination in all areas and at all levels of sport and physical education.

### United Nations intergovernmental processes

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, provides important policy recommendations on women, gender equality and sport. The Platform calls for the provision of accessible recreational and sport facilities by educational institutions, the establishment and strengthening of gender-sensitive programmes for girls and women of all ages in education and community institutions, and the creation and support of programmes in the education system, workplace and community to make opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity available to girls and women of all ages, on the same basis as they are made available to men and boys.<sup>21</sup>

The Commission on the Status of Women, the principal global policymaking body on gender equality, addressed sport and physical activity in its review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. In agreed conclusions 1999/17 (I) on women and health, the Commission called on Governments, the United Nations system and civil society to encourage women to practise regular sport and recreational activities, which have a positive impact on women’s health, well-being and fitness throughout the whole life cycle, and ensure that women enjoy equal opportunities to practise sport, use sport facilities and take part in competitions.<sup>22</sup>

The outcome of the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action rec-



## Sport and the Beijing Platform for Action

Under the critical area of concern on **education**, the Platform calls for Governments, educational authorities and other educational and academic institutions to provide accessible recreational and sport facilities and establish and strengthen gender-sensitive programmes for girls and women of all ages in education and community institutions and support the advancement of women in all areas of athletics and physical activity, including coaching, training and administration, and as participants at the national, regional and international levels.

In relation to **health**, the Platform calls for Governments to create and support programmes in the education system, workplace and community to make opportunities to participate in sport, physical activity and recreation available to girls and women of all ages on the same basis as they are made available to men and boys.

In the critical area of concern on **power and decision-making**, the Platform notes that the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions in the areas of art, culture, sport, the media, education, religion and law have prevented women from having a significant impact on many key institutions.

In relation to the situation of the **girl-child**, the Platform calls for Governments and international and non-governmental organizations to promote the full and equal participation of girls in extracurricular activities, such as sport, drama and cultural activities.

*Source:* United Nations (1995). *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 4-15 September 1995*. New York (United Nations publication. Sales No. 96.IV.13). Critical Area of Concern B, Education and training of women, Strategic Objective B.2, para. 83 (m). See the Critical Area of Concern C, Women and health, Strategic Objective C.2, para. 107 (f); Critical Area of Concern G, Women in power and decision-making, para. 183; and, Critical Area of Concern L, The girl-child, Strategic Objective L.4, para. 280 (d).

ognized the need for gender equality in sport and physical education. It called on Governments and regional and international organizations, including the United Nations system, to ensure equal opportunities for women and girls in cultural, recreational and sport activities, as well as in participation in athletics and physical activities at the national, regional and international levels, such as in access, training, competition, remuneration and prizes.<sup>23</sup>

The understanding that sport programmes can be an important vehicle for promoting gender equality has continued to advance, particularly since the establishment of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. In 2006, the General Assembly, for the first time, specifically invited Member States to initiate sport programmes

to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.<sup>24</sup>

## United Nations treaty bodies

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides binding obligations for States parties on eliminating discrimination against women and girls in the area of sports and physical education. Article 10 calls for States parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education, including ensuring the same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education. Article 13 calls for

States parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on the basis of equality between women and men, the same rights, including the right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.<sup>25</sup>

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has also reminded States parties, in its general recommendation No. 25 on temporary special measures, that temporary special measures, such as positive action, preferential treatment or quota systems, should be implemented in the areas of sports, culture and recreation. The Committee further emphasized that, where necessary, such measures should be directed at women subjected to multiple discrimination, including rural women.<sup>26</sup>

## Other international and regional policy frameworks

Other processes have also contributed to global and regional policy frameworks on women, gender equality and sport. International bodies that have been particularly active in developing such frameworks include the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education, the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee and numerous groups and networks, such as the International Working Group on Women and Sport, WomenSport International and the International Association of Physical Education for Women and Girls.

### International processes

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) plays a central leadership role in the world of sport, and its policies set standards in international, regional and national sporting events and procedures. In 1994, it requested that the Olympic Charter be amended to include an explicit reference to the

need for action on women and sport. This is reflected in the current Charter, adopted in 2004, which states that one of the roles of the Committee is to “encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women.”<sup>27</sup>

In 1995, the International Olympic Committee established a Working Group on Women and Sport, which was elevated to the status of a Commission in 2004. The Women and Sport Commission, which meets once a year, monitors the participation of women in the Olympics as well as their representation in decision-making. The Commission organizes quadrennial IOC World Conferences on Women and Sport to assess progress made in women and sport within the Olympic Movement, define priority actions and increase the involvement of women.

The International Working Group on Women and Sport, an independent coordinating body of government organizations, aims to be a catalyst for the advancement and empowerment of women and sport globally. It was established in 1994 at the First World Conference on Women and Sport, held in Brighton, United Kingdom, organized by the British Sports Council and supported by the International Olympic Committee. At this conference, the Brighton Declaration was adopted and endorsed by the 280 delegates from 82 countries representing Governments, NGOs, National Olympic Committees, international and national sport federations, and educational and research institutions.

The Second International Working Group on Women and Sport World Conference on Women and Sport took place in Windhoek, Namibia, in 1998. The Windhoek Call for Action further developed the aims of the Brighton Declaration, calling for the promotion of sport as a means to realize broader goals in health, education and women’s human rights.<sup>28</sup> This idea was strengthened in the Montreal Communiqué

### **Resolution of the Second International Olympic Committee World Conference on Women and Sport**

The resolution, adopted in 2000, calls for a number of strategies and actions to be taken by the International Olympic Committee, Governments and international organizations, including the United Nations system, such as:

- Meeting the 20 per cent goal of women in decision-making by 2005;
- Increasing scholarships and training for women athletes, coaches and other officials;
- Raising awareness about the positive influence of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on the development of physical activity and sport for women and girls;
- Urging the Commission on the Status of Women to recognize the importance of physical activity and sport to women’s and girls’ development at all stages of their lives;
- Raising awareness about the importance of quality physical education;
- Developing strategies and educational material to support physical education for girls;
- Implementing sexual harassment policies, including codes of conduct; and
- Working with the media to ensure a more accurate projection of women’s sport.

*Source:* International Olympic Committee (2000). *Resolution of the 2nd IOC World Conference on Women and Sport*. Paris, France. Available from [http://www.olympic.org/common/asp/download\\_report.asp?file=en\\_report\\_757.pdf&id=757](http://www.olympic.org/common/asp/download_report.asp?file=en_report_757.pdf&id=757)

### **The Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport**

The Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport calls for:

- Equality in society and sport;
- Sport facilities that meet the needs of women;
- An increase in the number of women coaches, advisers and decision-makers in sport;
- Education, training and development programmes that address gender equality;
- Information and research on women and sport;
- Allocation of resources for sportswomen and women’s programmes; and
- Incorporation of the promotion of gender equality and sharing of good practices into governmental and non-governmental policies and programmes on women and sport.

*Source:* International Working Group on Women and Sport (1994). *The Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport*. Available from <http://www.iwgti.org>

adopted at the Third IWG World Conference in Montreal, Canada, in 2002, which recognized that the path to realizing these broader goals involves a

variety of actions, including information and advocacy campaigns and the integration of sport into community development projects.<sup>29</sup> The Fourth IWG

### ***The Montreal Tool Kit—A Manual for Change***

*The Montreal Tool Kit* was developed for the Third World Conference on Women and Sport as a reference manual containing 20 tools to help women activists working to increase women's participation in sports. The manual includes tools on advocacy and awareness-raising, such as "Creating an advocacy strategy" and "Non-sexist sport commentary for media"; tools for changing organizations, such as "Terms of reference for a Women and Sport Committee" and "Sample harassment policy"; tools for individual development, such as "Building a case for mentoring"; and other tools for action, such as "Measuring your success".

Source: International Working Group on Women and Sport (2002a). *The Montreal Tool Kit. A legacy of 2002 World Conference*. Canada: International Working Group on Women and Sport. Available from <http://www.canada2002.org/e/toolkit/index.htm>

World Conference, held in May 2006 in Kumamoto, Japan,<sup>30</sup> concluded with the Kumamoto Commitment to Collaboration, which expressed participants' commitment to building a collaborative network in order to realize gender equality in and through sport.<sup>31</sup>

#### ***Regional processes***

Regional bodies also address gender equality issues in sport. For example, in 2005, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed recommendation 1701 on discrimination against women and girls in sport. The recommendation calls on the Committee of Ministers to promote women's sport and women's participation in sport; accord greater importance to school-based physical education for women and girls; conduct awareness-raising among officials in sport, education and health; support women's participation in top-level sport; ensure equality in terms of pay, prize money and bonuses; ensure that women play a greater role in ruling bodies of sports organizations; conduct an in-depth study of national sport policies; ensure collection of gender-specific statistics; and increase media coverage of women in sport.<sup>32</sup> The recommendation also calls for the combating of sexual abuse in relation to sport, which follows on from the 2000 Council of Europe resolution on the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of

women, young people and children in sport (3/2000).<sup>33</sup>

In 2002, the African Sports Confederation of Disabled (ASCOD) established a policy on disabled women's and girls' participation in sport and recreation. The policy aims to increase the participation of women and girls at all levels of sport and recreation in order to achieve gender equality, and calls on the Confederation and its member nations to bear the duty of advising Ministers of Sport on ways to meet the targets set out in the policy.<sup>34</sup>

In 2001, the first Asian Conference on Women and Sport, held in Osaka, Japan, led to the establishment of the Asian Working Group on Women and Sport (AWG). The Working Group developed the Asian Women and Sport Action Plan 2001, which sought to expand equal opportunities for women and men and girls and boys in Asia to participate fully in sport.<sup>35</sup> The second Asian Conference, held in Qatar in 2003, adopted the "Doha Conference Resolutions", which encouraged all parties to actively support women and sport.<sup>36</sup> The "Yemen Challenge", adopted at the third Asian Conference in Yemen in 2005, emphasized the importance of continued promotion and development of women in sport in Asia and included a request for all Asian Governments and National Olympic Committees to formulate a national women and sport policy by

the 2006 Doha Asian Games, and to include therein a special chapter on women with disabilities.<sup>37</sup>

The Commonwealth Games Federation also promotes the role of women in sport as participants and as decision-makers. Regulation 6 of its March 2006 Constitution states that the Commonwealth Games retains its status as a leader in promoting gender equality, and that future programmes in sports will have a balanced participation and profile for males and females. Article 17 of the Constitution also states that both women and men shall contribute at least 20 per cent or two of the representatives on the Executive Board and on the Sports Committee and any other committees and commissions formed by the Executive Board.<sup>38</sup>

### **Sport as a vehicle for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls**

*"... [M]y trainers taught me to believe in myself... I was inspired and learned determination and discipline. Sports allow you to get to know yourself."*

—Nawal El Moutawakel, the first Olympic gold medallist from Morocco (1984 Olympics —hurdles)<sup>39</sup>

The relationship between gender equality and sport is not solely about achieving equality in women's participation and treatment within sports, but it is also about promoting "sport for gender equality", or harnessing the potential of sport for social empowerment of women and girls. Sport offers a valuable channel to strengthen women's and girls' capabilities and provide information on important social issues, such as health, HIV/AIDS and women's rights. Women's and girls' participation in sport can also challenge gender stereotypes and break down entrenched discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. Myriam Lamare, a World Boxing



Association champion from France, has said that the punches she lands shake the foundations of society.<sup>40</sup>

### Empowering women and girls through sport

Sport can be an important tool for social empowerment through the skills and values learned, such as teamwork, negotiation, leadership, communication and respect for others. The social benefits of participation in sport are thought to be especially important for girls, given that many girls, particularly in adolescence, have fewer opportunities than boys for social interaction outside the home and beyond family structures.<sup>41</sup> Women and girls acquire new interpersonal networks, develop a sense of identity and access new opportunities, allowing them to become more engaged in school and community life.<sup>42</sup> Participation in sport also enables women and girls to enjoy freedom of expression and movement and increase their self-esteem and self-confidence.

It has also been argued that sport and physical education can serve as the basis for a sense of "positive embodiment". This concept goes beyond the idea of physical fitness and incorporates psychological benefits and the

pursuit of active spiritual practices. The psychological benefits of physical activity, essential for a sense of positive embodiment, can be acquired through the enjoyment of the physical activity, self-chosen levels of competition, and the provision of social support from the family and the community.<sup>43</sup>

The concept of positive embodiment implies that women and girls have the right and responsibility to create active, healthy lifestyles to sustain vitality in their lives. There are psychological, emotional and medical benefits to doing so, as well as significant broader

economic and social gains. The concept starts with traditional fitness and adds psychosocial wellness strategies and the pursuit of active self-care for body, mind and spirit. Positive embodiment requires a lifestyle incorporating self-assertion and self-care which is the basis of a vigorous and satisfying sense of one's own body.<sup>44</sup>

Positive embodiment can be seen as a model of self-care that allows women to achieve a balance between caring for themselves and caring for others. Most women prioritize the needs of others before their own needs, a pattern that often leads to neglect of themselves. As a result, women deplete their resources of time and energy in the care of others. Self-care involves the creation of personal time and space for women and opportunities for positive interaction of the mind, body and spirit. Adoption of the physical embodiment approach, with its critical concept of active self-care, would require complex changes in lifestyle for many women.<sup>45</sup>

Sport can serve as a vehicle to improve women's and girls' leadership roles and participation in decision-making. The acquisition of valuable skills in management, negotiation and decision-making empowers women and girls to become leaders in all areas of community life, as well as in the household.

### Women swimming into the future

In the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia, many women and girls were not able to swim or were not capable of climbing onto the roofs, up trees or to other safe areas. Women Without Borders, together with the Austrian Swimming Association and the Austrian Life-Saving Federation, are therefore implementing a programme to offer swimming lessons for girls and women in the South Indian coastal regions. This is not only a valuable contribution to their future survival, but also strengthens self-confidence and develops group identity and solidarity among the women. In addition, this unique initiative will bring more respect and an elevated status for women within their rural societies.

Source: Women Without Borders. *Women Swimming into the Future. Promoting and strengthening women in the South Asian Tsunami region.* A Women Without Borders Pilot Program for Swimming Training. Available from <http://sport.austria.gv.at/Docs/2005/7/8/Women%20Swimming%201%20page%20ok.doc>

### Empowerment of Afghan women through sport

The Afghan Women's Network (AWN) is a network of 97 NGOs working to empower Afghan women. They work on, among other things, breaking the restrictions on free movement of women, including through sport. The Network creates opportunities for girls to participate in sport in schools and be more physically active, and improve confidence and positive self-esteem. The Network also raises awareness among the young women about their rights and their potential contributions to their families, communities and to the nation. AWN is working in four schools in two locations: Jalalabad and Peshawar. Each school has a volleyball team and is supported by a coach. Matches have been played in the schools and a final match was held between schools at the end of 2007. A total of 48 young girls benefited directly from the programme.

Source: Mama Cash (2007). *(she's into sports) How sports promote gender-equity worldwide.* Available from [http://www.mamacash.org/uploads/File/she%20has%20news/publicaties/She's\\_into\\_sports\\_18-05-07\\_web.pdf](http://www.mamacash.org/uploads/File/she%20has%20news/publicaties/She's_into_sports_18-05-07_web.pdf)

### Empowering girls as leaders

A number of initiatives are being implemented to give girls the chance to be leaders, improve their confidence, increase their self-awareness and strengthen their capacities in terms of decision-making, critical thinking and negotiating. A project in Kenya on football and peer-led health education for rural teenage girls uses trained girl referees to officiate at all matches during the organization's annual tournaments. In Zambia, the Go Sisters! project aims to empower girls through sport by training them to become peer leaders, providing them with scholarships, and involving them in all levels of decision-making.

*Source: Sports and Development Projects.* Sport and Development official website. Available from [www.sportanddev.org/en/projects/index.htm](http://www.sportanddev.org/en/projects/index.htm); and International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (2005). *Newsletter*. November. Available from <http://www.iapesgw.org/Newsletters/IAPESGW%20Newsletter%20December%202005.doc>

In Saint Lucia, the Healthy Lifestyles Programme exposes girls to sport skills through regional netball tournaments as well as through instruction in healthy lifestyles. Workshops build leadership among girls, with training in goal-setting, teamwork and decision-making skills. The Programme also promotes healthy lifestyles and covers topics such as exercise, nutrition, sexuality, drugs and alcohol.

*Source: Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat.* "Regional Survey of Development through Sport Programmes implemented at the country level." Available from [http://www.caricom.org/jsp/community\\_organ/regionalsurvey\\_sportsprogrammes.jsp?menu=cob](http://www.caricom.org/jsp/community_organ/regionalsurvey_sportsprogrammes.jsp?menu=cob)

As more and more women and girls serve in leadership and decision-making positions, their influence as role models and mentors encourages more women and girls to participate at all levels of sport. Promoting and docu-

menting the successes of women and girl leaders in the world of sport is an important step in raising awareness and providing encouragement and support to other aspiring leaders.

### Enhancing women's confidence and leadership through sports in Pakistan

The Pakistan Association of Women Sport, affiliated with the national sports organization, is active in promoting women's participation in sports in Pakistan. Believing that sport provides an excellent venue for women to gain confidence and develop decision-making and leadership skills for future life, the Association organizes seminars, clinics and workshops of women leaders in the sports field to promote a cross-cultural exchange of ideas on women in sports and sports decision-making. The Association also aims to raise awareness about the development needs of Pakistan, particularly those relating to young women.

*Source: Oglesby, Carole A., in collaboration with the International Working Group on Women and Sport, WomenSport International, the International Association of Physical Education for Women and Girls, and the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (2006).* *Positive Embodiment: Contributions of Sport, Exercise and Physical Recreation to the Life-long Development of Girls and Women*. (Brief prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women).

Sporting activities can be an important forum for providing information to women and girls on sexuality and health, including reproductive health. Girls' participation in sport can generate a greater awareness and understanding of their bodies and its functions, as well as a greater sense of self-ownership and respect. A study by the Women's Sports Foundation on sport and teen pregnancy in the United States found that the sense of ownership and respect for their bodies developed by adolescent girls who participate in sport encourages them to delay sexual activity, thereby reducing the levels of teen pregnancy.<sup>46</sup> Research on links between sport and girls' sexual behaviour has also been conducted by the Wellesley Centers for Women. The study showed that the decrease in risky sexual behaviour among girls who participate in sport is partly due to a delay in sexual initiation and partly due to social-psychological dynamics, such as enhanced self-confidence, a less stereotypical gender identity and/or a stronger desire to avoid teenage pregnancy.<sup>47</sup>

The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace found that the groups most at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS—women and young people, especially girls—

### Reaching out to young women on reproductive health

A Kenyan NGO, Moving the Goalposts Kilifi, uses football practices and matches as an entry point for peer education on reproductive health. The organization holds discussion groups with girls after practice, facilitated by trained peer educators, on topics such as reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, assertiveness and decision-making.

*Source: Sports and Development Projects.* Sport and Development official website. Available from [www.sportanddev.org/en/projects/index.htm](http://www.sportanddev.org/en/projects/index.htm)

were highly responsive to sports-targeted initiatives.<sup>48</sup> This is an important finding since women now represent half of all people living with HIV, nearly 60 per cent of all infections in Africa and 77 per cent of new HIV infections among young people in Africa.<sup>49</sup>

Ways in which sport can contribute to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS include, for example, sports leagues and matches that provide a forum for public information campaigns on prevention and protection, and a safe and supportive environment among teams and organizations to encourage open discussion about HIV/AIDS and sexual behaviour.<sup>50</sup>

Sport can provide a critical space to build a culture of peace in countries emerging from conflict. Through its power to bring people together across boundaries, cultures and religions, it can promote tolerance and reconciliation. Women play an important role in the

prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, as reaffirmed in Security Council resolution 1325.<sup>51</sup> The power of sport and its inclusive nature makes it a good tool to increase knowledge, understanding and awareness about peaceful coexistence. Sport could be more effectively used in the context of follow-up to Security Council resolution 1325.

### **Programmes using sport as a vehicle to promote peace, tolerance and understanding**

In 2003, "Sport pour la Paix" ("Sport for Peace") was launched in Côte d'Ivoire to bring together over 1,600 young people, a third of them girls, from different ethnic, political and religious groups after years of conflict.

*Source:* Schaub Reisle, Maia (2005), "Sport as tool for peace building". In Tip Sheet. Bern: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC Conflict Prevention and Transformation Division (COPRET). Available from [http://www.deza.ch/de/Home/Themes/Conflict\\_prevention\\_and\\_transformation/Violence\\_prevention/ressources/resource\\_en\\_92813.pdf](http://www.deza.ch/de/Home/Themes/Conflict_prevention_and_transformation/Violence_prevention/ressources/resource_en_92813.pdf)

"Kicking for Reconciliation!", a project in Rwanda by Women Without Borders, aims to provide football training to 160 Hutu and Tutsi girls together, with a focus on self-confidence, self-awareness and trauma healing, so that they may contribute to the establishment of a peaceful and modern society in their country.

*Source:* Women Without Borders (2005). *Rwanda: Kicking for Reconciliation!* Vienna, Austria: AWomenWithout Borders Football for Girls' Project in Kigali. Available from <http://www.women-without-borders.org/projects/underway/18/>

### **Reducing stress conditions through physical activity among women in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Dr. Fadila Ibrahimbegovic-Gafic from the University of Sarajevo assessed the initial physical and mental conditions of 70 women and conducted a physical activity programme that aimed to reduce stress conditions in women aged 40-55 in war-stricken areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The programme succeeded not only in reducing stress but also in changing attitudes towards physical exercise and its effects on physical recovery.

*Source:* Oglesby, Carole A., in collaboration with the International Working Group on Women and Sport, WomenSport International, the International Association of Physical Education for Women and Girls, and the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (2006). *Positive Embodiment: Contributions of Sport, Exercise and Physical Recreation to the Life-long Development of Girls and Women*. (Brief prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women.)

The promotion of education can also be facilitated by sport. Sports teams and organizations, as well as local, national and international competitions, provide an excellent opportunity to provide information and knowledge on the importance of girls' education. In particular, sport can be a useful tool to expand educational opportunities for children who are not able to go to school or who only attend on an irregular basis.

Research on the impact of physical education on academic performance is also emerging. The interlinkages between perceptual, cognitive and motor development are such that many argue that physical activity such as physical education

### **Raising awareness in the sport community about HIV/AIDS**

In 2004, the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Olympic Committee to combine their efforts to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, particularly among the sport community. Following this initiative, an HIV-positive woman from South Africa, Musa Njoko, one of the first South African women to publicly disclose her HIV status, was nominated by UNAIDS to participate in the Olympic Torch Relay held in Cape Town in June 2004.

*Source:* Right to Play (2004). *Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace*. Greece: Position Paper presented at the Athens Roundtable Forum on 14 August 2004. Available from <http://www.sportanddev.org/data/document/document/15.pdf>

and sport is critical for optimal learning. Research findings indicate that:

- Physical activity has positive effects on the ability to concentrate;
- An increase in physical activity can lead to improvements in problem-solving skills and improved academic results; and
- There is a high correlation between high standardized test scores and high fitness scores.<sup>52</sup>

Studies in the United States, for example, have also pointed to a positive relationship between girls' participation in sport, positive attitudes towards education and higher academic achievements.<sup>53</sup> Gender-sensitive programmes that successfully increase girls' participation in sport therefore have the potential to positively influence girls' academic performance.

### **Promoting girls' education through sport**

A UNICEF project links sport to girls' education based on the belief that sport, like education, can help girls become equal players in society. On 11 October 2003, Global Girls' Football Day, UNICEF country offices and national associations of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) came together to mobilize efforts for girls' education through the power of sport. That same year, FIFA dedicated its Women's World Cup to UNICEF's Go Girls! Education for Every Child campaign. Go Girls! was seen and heard throughout the tournament in a variety of ways—from stadium announcements and video screenings to match programmes and web pages.

*Source:* UNICEF. *Sport, Education and Girls*. Available from [http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/campaign\\_sport\\_education\\_girls.html](http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/campaign_sport_education_girls.html)

### **Challenging stereotypes and reducing discrimination**

Given that sport was traditionally a male domain, the participation of women and girls in sport challenges a multitude of gender stereotypes, not only those related to physical ability but also those regarding women's role in local communities and society at large. By directly challenging and dispelling misconceptions about women's capabilities, integrated sport programmes help to reduce discrimination and broaden the role prescribed to women.<sup>54</sup> An increase of women in leadership positions in sport can also have a significant influence on social attitudes towards women's capabilities as leaders and decision makers.

### **Sport as a catalyst for challenging gender stereotypes**

The Population Council operates a community-based programme, "Safe Spaces to Learn, Play and Grow", in rural Egypt through NGO and government partners that provide protected spaces, such as schools or youth centres, where girls meet for learning and recreation. The programme aims to challenge traditional concepts of gender-appropriate behaviour by incorporating sport and recreation activities, along with literacy, life-skills training and reproductive health awareness.

*Source:* Brady, Martha (2005). "Letting girls play: Using sport to create safe spaces and build social assets." In *Promoting healthy, safe, and productive transitions to adulthood*, Brief No. 1, May 2005. New York: Population Council. Available from [http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/TABriefs/GFD\\_BRIEF1\\_SPORTS\\_update.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/TABriefs/GFD_BRIEF1_SPORTS_update.pdf)

### **Coaching boys into men**

As part of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and UNICEF Unite for Children, Unite for Peace campaign, a manual for football coaches, "Coaching Boys Into Men", was launched during the 2006 World Cup. In recognition that coaches can have a unique role in addressing issues of violence and discrimination, particularly against women and girls, the manual is intended to help coaches talk to young athletes about tolerance and teach them that violence does not equal strength.

*Source:* United Nations Children's Fund (2006). *UNICEF and FIFA partnership for 2006 FIFA World Cup Germany highlights peace and tolerance*. United Kingdom: UNICEF News. Available from [http://www.unicef.org.uk/press/news\\_detail\\_full\\_story.asp?news\\_id=685](http://www.unicef.org.uk/press/news_detail_full_story.asp?news_id=685)

Girls' participation in sport carries with it an enormous potential for positive impact on attitudes towards gender equality among the younger generation. An analysis of the Mathare Youth Sports Association in Kenya found that although boys in the Association expressed stereotypical attitudes to the girl soccer players (for example, that girls do not learn quickly, are fragile and give up easily), seeing girls achieve success in soccer, which had previously been a male domain, had begun to reshape their notions about girls' roles and capabilities.<sup>55</sup>

The sports arena provides an opportunity to reach out to men and boys on issues related to stereotypical attitudes and gender-based discrimination and violence. The broad participation of men and boys in sport, as both athletes and spectators, provides a powerful forum for educating and informing men and boys on a variety of issues, including violence against women and girls, and for breaking down entrenched attitudes and stereotypical behaviours. Male ath-



letes who speak out on such issues can be particularly effective given their position as role models in the community.

Role models of women in sport, including star women athletes, such as Nellie Kim (Russian Federation—gymnastics), Mia Hamm (USA—soccer), Takahashi Naoko (Japan—marathon runner), Kirsten Bruhn (Germany—swimmer), Hortencia Maria de Fatima Marcari (Brazil—soccer) and Maria Sharapova (Russian Federation—tennis), also play a central role in challenging stereotypes. Nawal El Moutawakel (Morocco—hurdles) recognizes her position as a role model for women, especially Muslim women, and says that her main function as a member of the International Olympic Committee is “to encourage more women to participate in sport worldwide.”<sup>56</sup> Serena Williams, motivated by her participation in the United Nations Global Youth Leadership Summit, held in New York from 29 to 31 October 2006, undertook a mission to Ghana and Senegal to highlight the role of sport, youth, and empowerment of women and girls in achieving the MDGs.<sup>57</sup>

The potential for sport to contribute to the social, economic and political empowerment of women and girls is clear and has been recognized by Governments, the United Nations system, NGOs and other actors. The task ahead is to act on this recognition and bring the benefits of sport and physical education to women and girls throughout the world.

### Promoting role models in South America and the Caribbean

The Women and Sport Working Group in Guyana, established under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, promoted women role models in sport during Guyana’s 2001 International Women’s Day celebrations. They organized a “Female Cavalcade of Sport”, which showcased females in 15 different sports with approximately 300 athletes taking part. The Working Group also produced a television programme of highlights of women in sport at all levels.

Source: International Working Group on Women and Sport (2002). *Women and Sport Progress Report 1998-2002*. Bonn, Germany. Available from [http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3\\_america.htm](http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3_america.htm)

### Football teams raising awareness of violence against women

In 2005, top football teams from Barranquilla, Bogotá, Cali and Cartagena in Colombia supported White Ribbon Day, the International Day against Violence against Women, by displaying placards in their stadiums for the campaign before their championship matches in order to raise awareness about all forms of violence against women.

Source: United Nations Office of Sport for Development and Peace (2005). *United Nations Sports Bulletin*, No. 4, 15 June. New York. Available from [http://www.un.org/sport2005/newsroom/bulletin/united\\_nations\\_sport\\_bulletin\\_4\\_15\\_june\\_05.pdf](http://www.un.org/sport2005/newsroom/bulletin/united_nations_sport_bulletin_4_15_june_05.pdf)

### Addressing gender inequalities in sport

*“It is heartening that so many public and voluntary sports and physical education organizations have embraced the challenge of gender equality. It means that more and more girls and women may receive the same benefits which boys and men have enjoyed for years, and their fair share of the social resources available . . . It is not enough simply to extend the programs which males have enjoyed to females. Given the differences in needs, interests and circumstances, and the diversity of the female population, it will require careful ‘needs based’ planning and innovative programming.”*

—Professor Bruce Kidd, Dean of the Faculty of Physical Education and Health,

University of Toronto, Canada, and former Regional Coordinator for International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education, North America (1999).

In order to realize the full potential for sport as a vehicle for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, gender inequality in sport must be addressed. The prevalence of gender-based discrimination in sport mirrors traditional gender stereotypes and reinforces gender inequalities. Opportunities for women and girls to participate in sport may be restricted. Even when participation is allowed, the dynamics of gender relations and notions of masculinity and femininity may result in gender segregation in different types of sport and physical education. Inequalities also exist in access to resources, wages and financial incentives and in media representation of women athletes and women’s sport. The lack of women and girls in decision-making and leadership positions, as well as exploitation, harassment and violence against women and girls, is also prevalent in sport and the commercial sporting industry.

### Access and participation

Although restrictions on women’s and girls’ access to and participation in sport have been present throughout history, gradual progress has been achieved. In 1900, the first 19 women competed in the modern Olympic Games in Paris in

### Sports legislation for women in Hungary

The “Law of Sports”, enacted by the Hungarian Parliament in December 2000, ensured equal opportunities for men and women and for boys and girls to choose and participate in sport, contribute to the development of leadership in sport and enjoy funding to execute different sport programmes. It also required all sporting organizations, foundations, federations and committees to raise the participation of women to 10 per cent by November 2001, 20 per cent by November 2002, 30 per cent by November 2003 and 35 per cent by November 2004.

Source: International Working Group on Women and Sport (2002). *Women and Sport Progress Report 1998-2002*. Bonn, Germany. Available from [http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3\\_america.htm](http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3_america.htm)

just three sports—tennis, golf and croquet.<sup>58</sup> By the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, women competed in 26 out of 28 sports and represented 40.7 per cent of the total number of athletes, setting a historical record for women’s participation in the Olympic Games.<sup>59</sup> Such progress has been spurred on by women athletes, as well as Governments and civil society organizations that have advocated for gender equality in sport and sought to address the many physical and social barriers to the full participation of women and girls.

#### *Physical barriers to the participation of women and girls in sport*

Women continue to be discriminated against in official regulations of international competitions and rules of major sporting facilities. The Augusta National Golf Club in the United States, which hosts the annual Masters Tournament, continues to uphold its men-only membership policy. This has led to strong opposition by national women’s organizations and women’s rights activists.<sup>60</sup> Progress is, however, being made in other institutions. For example, the 250-year-old Royal & Ancient Club in Scotland, considered the world’s leading authority on golf, lifted a long-standing ban on women playing at the Open Championship in 2005.<sup>61</sup> Also, in 2004, the United States Professional Bowlers Association (PBA) opened the

way for women to qualify for the PBA Tour and, in 2006, Kelly Kulick became the first woman to qualify for a season-long exemption.<sup>62</sup>

Although some physical barriers to women’s participation in sport are common across the world, including a widespread lack of appropriate facilities and resources, it is also important to recognize that participation varies across time and space and many constraints are context-specific. For example, particular restrictions on women’s mobility in some countries can make it difficult for them to take part in events held in public spaces.

Sport clothing has been a constant area of controversy and resistance to women’s participation in sport. In 1931, Lili de Álvarez (Spain) shocked social propriety by playing Wimbledon in shorts instead of the long dresses that women tennis players were expected to wear. Sporting accessories have traditionally been designed for use by men

### The International Olympic Committee’s Women and Sport Trophy

The International Olympic Committee’s Women and Sport Trophy, introduced in 2000, is awarded annually to promote the advancement of women in sport and recognize outstanding achievement and contributions made to develop, encourage and strengthen the participation of women and girls at all levels in the sports world. The world trophy for 2006 was awarded to Argentinean tennis player Gabriela Sabatini. In addition, five regional trophies were presented: Albertine Barbosa Andrade (Senegal/Africa—cycling), Charmaine Crooks (Canada/Americas—sprinting), Elisa Lee (Korea/Asia—table tennis), Dominique Petit (France/Europe—volleyball) and Lorraine Mar (Fiji/Oceania—badminton/tennis).

Source: Gabriela Sabatini, winner of the world IOC Women and Sport Trophy. In official website of the Olympic Movement. Available from [http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/women/full\\_story\\_uk.asp?id=1748](http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/women/full_story_uk.asp?id=1748)

### Pakistan mini-marathon overcomes obstacles facing women

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the Joint Action Committee for People’s Rights organized a symbolic mini-marathon on 21 May 2005 in Pakistan to challenge arbitrary curbs on women’s public participation in sport and to highlight rising violence against women. About 500 mostly middle-aged men and women jogged through a police-lined street of Lahore, just a week after police had used force to halt the first attempt at a mixed-sex race.

Source: United Nations Office of Sport for Development and Peace (2005). *United Nations Sports Bulletin*, No. 4, 15 June. New York. Available from [http://www.un.org/sport2005/newsroom/bulletin/united\\_nations\\_sport\\_bulletin\\_4\\_15\\_june\\_05.pdf](http://www.un.org/sport2005/newsroom/bulletin/united_nations_sport_bulletin_4_15_june_05.pdf)

and, for example, it was not until 1996 that Spalding Sports introduced the first baseball glove specifically designed for a woman's hand.<sup>63</sup> The issue of clothing can also be a constraint where socio-economic conditions mean that women and girls are unable to afford appropriate sporting attire.

Sporting attire may present a particular problem for Muslim women when dress codes prohibit them from wearing Western-style sport clothes. This issue is a concern not only for local community sports, but also for Muslim women participating in international events. For example, the Algerian Hassiba Boulmerka, who won the 1,500 metres in the 1992 Olympic Games wearing shorts, was forced into exile following the Games because of death threats.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, Iranian women competed in kayaking in the hijab at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta.<sup>65</sup> To provide suitable conditions for the participation of women in sporting activities in compliance with Islamic codes, the Women Islamic Games, organized by the Islamic Federation of Women Sport, were created.<sup>66</sup> According to

### **Sports clothes for Muslim women**

Women playing volleyball at a camp for displaced Somalis in Kenya have encountered considerable pressure from their community because of dress codes. In response, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has worked with Nike and other private companies to design sporting apparel that is comfortable and practical for sport but which keeps within the dress code acceptable to communities.

*Source:* UNHCR (2005). Designers on a mission: dressing refugee girls for sports. Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&page=home&id=42cbcd364>

### **Clothing and girls' participation in sport**

"Play Soccer", an NGO that offers football programmes for girls and boys in Zambia, recognized that a lack of clothing was prohibiting some children from participating. The programme provided shorts that children, especially girls, could wear during games, thereby enabling girls to move from spectators to active participants.

*Source:* Meier, Marianne (2005). *Gender Equity, Sport and Development*. Geneva, Switzerland: Swiss Academy for Development.

Sarah Hillyer, coach of the American team, the games have been successful in providing a venue for Muslim women to celebrate self-expression and develop self-confidence.<sup>67</sup> In non-Muslim countries, it can be difficult for Muslim women to participate in sport because of the lack of segregated facilities.<sup>68</sup>

The physical barriers to the participation of women and girls in sport can be overcome with a gender-sensitive approach to the redesign of existing facilities, the planning of new infrastructure, and the rules and regulations of sporting events and institutions. For example, the schedule of activities held in a community sports hall can be changed to allow women and girls access at convenient times. When a new sport complex is built, it can be designed as a space that encourages women and girls to participate, for example, by providing separate changing facilities. In addition, policies can be developed that ensure that existing facilities emphasize sport for all and explicitly welcome women and girls.<sup>69</sup>

### **Stereotypical attitudes towards women and girls in sport**

Social constraints are a further impediment to access to and participation in sport and physical education by women and girls. Some constraints are similar throughout the world, such as the perception that women's physical capabilities are inferior and the unequal sharing of household work and child-care responsibilities which imposes constraints on women's involvement in community activities, including sport.

A common social constraint is the stereotyping of sport as "masculine" or "feminine", which affects both male and female participation, and can be difficult to overcome. Men can be branded as "effeminate" if they abstain from sporting activities, and women are often channelled into "aesthetic" sports, such as gymnastics and ice-skating, where traits perceived as "female" are exhibited. Accepted norms of behaviour that expect women to be "ladylike" and demure excludes women in some

### **Building sports infrastructure for women in Ecuador**

In 2000, the Ecuadorian Olympic Committee opened the Juan Antonio Samaranch Women's Sports Centre—a sport centre exclusively for women—which offers courses in table tennis, volleyball, basketball and aerobic gymnastics. The Centre is named after the former President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), in recognition of his commitment to the participation of women in the Olympic Games and his role as the first IOC President to name a woman to the Executive Board.

*Source:* International Working Group on Women and Sport (2002). *Women and Sport Progress Report 1998-2002*. Bonn, Germany. Available from [http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3\\_america.htm](http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3_america.htm)

### Ice hockey for women and girls in the Himalayas

A recent film, *Thin Ice*, documents the efforts of women and girls in the Himalayas to play ice hockey. Since ice hockey was traditionally a male sport, women and girls were not encouraged to participate. Women created their own women's ice hockey team which brings together girls from different groups and backgrounds. The women and girls make their own ice courts and skates. They have successfully challenged many stereotypes around this sport.

*Source:* Håkan Berthas, Frederik Gertten & Margarete Jangard (2007). *Thin Ice*, a film by WG Film/Sveriges Television. Sweden.

contexts from participation in sporting activities that exhibit traditional male characteristics, especially contact sports (such as rugby) and "painful" sports (such as boxing).<sup>70</sup> When women and girls do engage in such sports, they can be labelled with negative traits, such as being "manly" or "unfeminine".

Sport provides opportunities for addressing discrimination faced by particular groups of women and girls. Women and girls with disabilities, for example, are frequently subject to multiple forms of discrimination. A prevailing code of silence<sup>71</sup> may result in fears of homophobia, preventing women and girls from participating fully in sport and achieving positive benefits.

Some leading sport figures are challenging such traditional notions of what it means to be a woman athlete. Myriam Lamare, a World Boxing Asso-

ciation champion from France, dispels the myths surrounding women's participation in "painful" sports. On International Women's Day 2006, she stated, "A woman who can box is a woman who can fight—at once capable of giving life and of defending it, in the true sense of the word. I am strong and feminine, vulnerable and active."<sup>72</sup>

Stereotypes can greatly affect the attitudes of men towards women and their role in sport. The attitudes of parents are particularly important for promoting girls' participation in sport. While some fathers strongly resist their daughter's participation, others are gradually accepting it, such as Rajkumar Singh, a poor farmer in the Indian state of Bihar, who admitted: "Initially, I had a lot of doubts. But today I feel proud of being father to two national football-playing daughters . . ."<sup>73</sup>

### The Commission on Women and Sports in Ecuador

The Commission on Women and Sports, established by the Ecuadorian Olympic Committee in 1998, tries to influence social attitudes by promoting educational activities on the role of women and their situation in sport. The Commission's activities include:

- Providing special funds to promote sport for women;
- Offering information courses to discuss the future of women in sport;
- Organizing conferences and other events to increase women's participation in sport;
- Creating regional and local networks that encourage women to participate in sport; and
- Undertaking research and collecting data on women and sport in order to monitor and maintain progress.

*Source:* International Working Group on Women and Sport (2002). *Women and Sport Progress Report 1998-2002*. Bonn, Germany. Available from [http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3\\_america.htm](http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3_america.htm)

### Studying attitudes towards women and girls in sport in India

A study was carried out in rural and urban India by the Indira Gandhi Institute of Physical Education and Sports Sciences on the attitudes of parents, teachers and coaches towards female participation in sport. The findings indicated that policies are needed at the local level to support and protect women's participation in sport and, in particular, efforts are required to remove misconceptions related to women's participation in sport and the impact of sport on women's health.

*Source:* Oglesby, Carole A., in collaboration with the International Working Group on Women and Sport, WomenSport International, the International Association of Physical Education for Women and Girls, and the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (2006). *Positive Embodiment: Contributions of Sport, Exercise and Physical Recreation to the Life-long Development of Girls and Women*. (Brief prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women.)

The attitudes of women and girls towards sport can also be restrictive. Women and girls may not have developed an understanding of the intrinsic value of sport and its contribution to personal development and well-being, or of their rights and potential in this area. Women and girls may also have internalized many negative perceptions of women and sport. Advocates are trying to change this perception, including Anita DeFrantz, Chairperson of the International Olympic Committee's Women and Sport Commission, who promotes the idea that "sport is a birthright [and] belongs to all human beings".<sup>74</sup>



### Raising awareness of sports and women in local communities

In Lithuania, the National Women and Sport Association used athletic festivals to raise awareness about women and sport, and established women's sporting days that demonstrate women's willingness and ability to coordinate sporting competitions and ceremonies. In West Bengal, local community-based NGOs developed a project to raise awareness of community sport and health development through local campaigns and training for women. The project also involved developing basic infrastructure for girls in community sport—such as playgrounds and gyms—and building a database on community sport for girls.

*Source:* International Working Group on Women and Sport (2002). *Women and Sport Progress Report 1998-2002*. Bonn, Germany. Available from [http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3\\_america.htm](http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3_america.htm)

Historical attitudes and the absence of gender stereotypes in sport have been recognized as an important factor in the remarkable success of Chinese women athletes in international competitions. Such attitudes are reflected in the prioritization of elite women's sport by the Chinese Government. At the same time, however, women are underrepresented in sport administration, coaching and other decision-making positions in China.<sup>75</sup>

Stereotypical attitudes towards women and girls and traditional gender roles are also prevalent in the organizational cultures of sporting bodies—the norms, values, power dynamics and practices that underlie the way such bodies and institutions do their work. This often results in unequal alloca-

tion of physical resources for women's sport. Resources are often less or of a lower standard than those provided to their male counterparts and, when resources such as equipment or playing fields are shared, men's teams are often given priority. For example, the men's and women's singles finals at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships are both supposed to be held on Centre Court, the centrepiece of the championships. When, however, postponements due to weather or other factors result in the matches being played simultaneously, the women's match will invariably be relocated to No. 1 Court. This is rationalized as part of Wimbledon's efforts to "have the most attractive matches played on the courts with the most spectator accommodation".<sup>76</sup>

This type of practice is also common at the community level. A study on a youth and sport initiative by the Mathare Youth Sports Association in Kenya found that boys were given priority in access to opportunities and resources, such as preferred schedules and playing fields. To address such practices, a gender-sensitive analysis of all areas of an organization's activities and operations can help to identify deeply entrenched attitudes and behaviours that discriminate against women and girls.

Stereotypical attitudes towards the value of women's sport also fuel inequality in wages, prizes and other financial incentives. For example, the average salary in the United States Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) is only 2 per cent of the all-male National Basketball Association's (NBA) average.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, although many international competitions have achieved equality in prize monies, including the French, Australian, Wimbledon and US Tennis Opens, others continue to offer different rewards for men and women. In 2007, for the first time, Wimbledon offered equal prize money for the men's and women's singles winner.<sup>78</sup>

Commercial endorsements and sponsorships are also an important part of a professional athlete's salary and career development. In general, it is an area where women receive far less support than their male counterparts, but there are some examples of female athletes breaking ground. The Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova has signed deals with Nike, Canon and Motorola and is worth an estimated US\$ 18.2 million, making her the world's best-compensated female athlete.<sup>79</sup> This trend is reflected in the Forbes 2006 list of top-earning athletes, which has five women placed in the top 25.<sup>80</sup> As more women athletes obtain such high-paying endorsements, greater recognition of women athletes as major-league players is likely to follow.

### Changing gender norms and stereotypes

The Mathare Youth Sports Association in Kenya initially followed gender norms in the division of labour for organizational tasks, for example, by making girls responsible for washing the football shirts and looking after younger children, while the boys handled the sport equipment and did maintenance chores. Following a series of gender-training workshops, the organization made concerted efforts to redefine the responsibilities of girls and boys and to share tasks equally.

*Source:* Brady, Martha (2005). Letting girls play: Using sport to create safe spaces and build social assets. In *Promoting healthy, safe, and productive transitions to adulthood*, Brief No. 1, May 2005. New York: Population Council. Available from [http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/TABriefs/GFD\\_BRIEF1\\_SPORTS\\_update.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/TABriefs/GFD_BRIEF1_SPORTS_update.pdf)

### Wimbledon 2005 Prize Money Summary (GB£)

	2006	2005	Increase	2004	Increase
Gentlemen's Singles winner	£655,000	£630,000	4%	£602,500	4.6%
Ladies' Singles winner	£625,000	£600,000	4%	£560,500	7.0%
Gentlemen's Doubles winners	£220,690	£218,500	1%	£215,000	1.4%
Ladies' Doubles winners	£205,280	£203,250	1%	£200,000	1.6%
Mixed Doubles winners	£90,000	£90,000	—	£90,000	—

Source: 2007 Wimbledon Prize Money. Wimbledon, The Official Website. Available from [http://www.wimbledon.org/en\\_GB/about/guide/prizemoney.html](http://www.wimbledon.org/en_GB/about/guide/prizemoney.html)

#### Sport and physical education throughout the life cycle

Despite all the evidence on the benefits of an active lifestyle, including physical education and sport, for women and girls, the percentage of women who describe themselves as physically active remains low. As powerful as the rationales and motivation for physical activity may be, the barriers faced by women can be overwhelming. These can include traditional perceptions that sweating and defined musculature are inappropriate for women; the lack of culturally relevant role models; the scarcity of facilities offering women-friendly equipment and programmes; the lack of free time due to work and family responsibilities; worries about safety; and shame and embarrassment about present appearance and capabilities.<sup>81</sup>

Women face specific challenges to access and participate in sport and physical activity throughout the different stages of the life cycle. While it is increasingly understood in many parts of the world that older women must engage in physical education and sport in order to add “years to life” and “life to years”, many older women continue to live sedentary lifestyles. Strategies to address this must identify and address the particular barriers older women face and must tailor programmes to their specific needs and priorities.<sup>82</sup> For older women, a lack of knowledge on the benefits of sport and physical activity is a significant barrier to increased participation, as are stereotypical attitudes towards older persons, inadequate community infrastructure and sport programmes, and illnesses and conditions that affect movement and agility.

#### Promoting participation in sport in Malaysia

The Women's Sports and Fitness Foundation in Malaysia is an NGO established in 1995 to pursue the empowerment of women through sport and physical activities. The Foundation has established, together with the Ministry of Sport, the biannual National Women's Games (2005 and 2007). Participants in the 2nd National Women's Games competed in 12 sports. A total of 5,000 athletes and officials attended. Through the well-managed programme of the Foundation, women of all ages and from all walks of life have the possibility to participate in a wide range of activities, ranging from sport for all activities to high-performance sports. In addition, the Foundation organizes women's coaching training throughout the country, and many women have obtained paid positions as coaches.

Source: Women's Sports and Fitness Foundation in Malaysia. Website. Available from <http://www.wsffm.com/index.php>

#### Sport for older women

The Egyptian Government promoted older women's participation in sport and physical activity by establishing 37 sports centres for women over 35 years of age. In each centre, around 150 women play basketball, volleyball, table tennis and other forms of recreational activities. In China, many older women visit local parks to participate in group exercise, ranging from t'ai chi to ballroom dancing. Through these activities they can improve their health and fitness at the same time as they build social networks. These networks are increasingly important due to shifts in demographics and family structures—traditionally, older people used to live with their children, whereas today, over 23 per cent of the elderly live alone.

Source: Oglesby, Carole A., in collaboration with the International Working Group on Women and Sport, WomenSport International, the International Association of Physical Education for Women and Girls, and the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (2006). *Positive Embodiment: Contributions of Sport, Exercise and Physical Recreation to the Life-long Development of Girls and Women* (brief prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women); and “China's break-dancing grandmother”. In *BBC News*. 10 April 2005. Available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4424789.stm>

For women of childbearing age, there are particular issues surrounding pregnancy and childbirth. During a National Sport and Pregnancy Forum in Australia in 2001, it was noted that the benefits of staying active and continuing sport at some level throughout pregnancy outweigh the potential risks. Experts also noted that there are several clear steps sporting organizations can take to minimize any risk of liability, for exam-

ple, by alerting pregnant sportswomen that there are possible risks involved in their participation and in obtaining appropriate releases and/or indemnities if they should choose to continue to participate. In most circumstances, Australia's Sex Discrimination Act 1984 effectively means that sporting administrators cannot ban the continued participation of pregnant sportswomen. Nevertheless, in most countries, pregnancy and childbirth often mean that women do not continue to compete in professional sport.<sup>83</sup>

The relationship between sport and the body raises particular issues for adolescents and young women. In some cultural settings, the onset of menstruation can be a barrier to adolescent girls' school attendance and, similarly, girls' participation in sport and physical education. In sub-Saharan Africa, researchers have documented that lack of sanitary products, clean, girls-only latrines and water for washing hands results in a significant number of girls not attending school.<sup>84</sup> Estimates by UNICEF show that one in 10 school-age African girls either skips school during menstruation or drops out entirely because of lack of sanitation.<sup>85</sup>

The heavy focus on the body in sport, including in the context of the sexualized promotion of female athletes, may lead to poor body image, particularly among adolescent girls.<sup>86</sup> The pressure to meet unrealistic weight or body fat levels can result in excessive dieting that may in turn lead to serious eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa. The number of females who exhibit restrictive eating behaviour, which does not necessarily meet the strict criteria for bulimia or anorexia, is estimated to range from between 15 and 62 per cent, depending on the sport.<sup>87</sup> Disordered eating can affect the health and performance of an athlete in various ways, including low energy and disrupted menstrual cycles, which can lead to a decrease in endogenous oestrogen and other hormones, resulting in low bone min-

### Maternity rights for Poland's sportswomen

Recognizing that the overwhelming majority of sportswomen abandoned further involvement in sport after giving birth to a child, Poland introduced an anti-discrimination provision in the Qualified Sports Act in 2005. The provision ensures that sportswomen receive a sport stipend in the full amount for the duration of their pregnancy and half the amount of the stipend for six months following childbirth.

*Source:* Introductory statement by Mrs. Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska, Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Poland to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, thirty-seventh session, 16 January 2007.

eral density and a higher risk for osteoporosis. This pattern of disordered eating, disrupted menstrual cycles and osteoporosis is known as the "female athlete triad".<sup>88</sup>

The female athlete triad is an issue that the International Olympic Committee Medical Commission's Working Group on Women in Sport has examined closely. They noted that it is the responsibility of team physicians to ensure the health and safety of athletes by educating athletes, coaches and parents about the issue; recognizing symptoms of eating disorders; preventing activities that place pressure on athletes to lose weight; and providing adequate treatment for conditions associated with the triad.<sup>89</sup> WomenSport International has also been active in this area and has appointed a task force to educate athletes and those responsible for their welfare about the dangers of the triad.<sup>90</sup>

Sport programmes should also take into consideration the specific needs of girls. Lessons learned from a series of sporting activities piloted by the Population Council suggest that successfully designing a girls' sport programme requires a number of specific actions:

- Adopt a "girl-centred" approach. Learn directly from girls about their needs and interests and seek their input in the design and scope of programmes. Recognition of girls' work burden and time constraints is required and serious consideration must be given to ways to address these problems.

- Create girls-only spaces that are safe from both physical and emotional dangers and provide girls with an arena for self-expression that is not hindered by male domination or authority.
- Seek parental and community permission for girls' participation prior to launching a programme, which will enhance girls' ability to take part.
- Enlist female coaches, referees and trainers. Developing a talent pool of female leaders is an urgent need in most developing countries.
- Identify a few key health issues that need to be addressed, and tailor a simple health education programme around them.<sup>91</sup>

For high school and collegiate girls and young women in the United States, the enactment of Title IX in 1972, a federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in education programmes and activities at any federally funded educational institution, has had significant impact on girls' participation in sport.

Despite a rapid increase of girls in high school sport after the passage of Title IX, the percentage of girl athletes has been increasing very slowly since the late 1970s: in 1978, girls made up approximately 32 per cent of athletes, rising only 5 percentage points—to 37 per cent—by 1993. If this trend continues, it will take until the year 2033 to achieve parity.<sup>92</sup> At the college level, women make up 54 per cent of students but only 43 per cent of athletes. Men's college athletics

also continue to receive more money than women's in scholarships, recruiting, head-coach salaries and operating expenses.<sup>93</sup> Although the law states that schools in violation of Title IX will lose their federal funding, this has never happened since the law came into force. Instead, Title IX compliance has been driven by lawsuits and threats of lawsuits.<sup>94</sup>

Such actions are behind recent rulings across the United States that require school cheerleading squads to support girls teams on an equal basis with the boys teams. The rulings have, however, received a mixed reaction. Some cheerleaders are not enthusiastic about cheering for the girls teams, often because the need to comply with the ruling has increased their workload and they are no longer sent to away-games. Some members of girls' sport teams have also been unhappy about the ruling, noting that they do not need or want cheerleaders during their games.<sup>95</sup>

### ***Physical education in schools***

For all girls and young women, access to physical education in schools can play an important role in promoting their participation in sport. During the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, physical education in schools worldwide was subject to decreasing curricula time, reduced financial, physical and human resources, and a low subject status. Since the Berlin Physical Education World Summit in November 1999, there have been significant improvements in school-based physical education in developed countries, but unfortunately little change in developing countries.<sup>96</sup>

The inclusion of physical education in official curricula does not necessarily promote physical activity among girls, as the physical education provided may be heavily biased towards boys in terms of types of activity, teaching styles and accessible resources. For example, physical education in some countries is optional for girls and many choose not to take part, a situation exacerbated

## **Title IX and gender equality in sport**

Title IX requires that women be provided an equitable opportunity to participate in sport; that female athletes receive athletic scholarships proportional to their participation; and that female athletes receive equal treatment, for example in the provision of equipment and supplies, scheduling of games and practice times, coaching, practice and competitive facilities, access to tutoring, publicity and promotions, and recruitment of student athletes. Title IX has also increased the salaries of coaches for women's teams.

*Source:* The National Collegiate Athletic Association. Official website. Available from [http://www1.ncaa.org/membership/ed\\_outreach/gender\\_equity/faq.html](http://www1.ncaa.org/membership/ed_outreach/gender_equity/faq.html)

by a lack of facilities, such as changing rooms for girls.<sup>97</sup>

In addition to policies that support the right to physical education, there is a need to ensure that policies and programmes on school-based physical education fully incorporate gender perspectives. For example, in addition to promoting an increase in participation by girls and young women, traditional stereotypes and gender-based segregation in sport and physical education should be discouraged. Both boys and girls need to be encouraged to move beyond the traditional classification of different types of sports as male (such as rugby) or female (such as netball), and to pursue a diverse range of physical activity. To achieve this, policies and programmes should be established to raise awareness among students, parents and staff; the number of women physical education teachers should be increased; gender-sensitive training

should be provided for all teachers; and adequate resources allocated.

### ***Sport and women with disabilities***

Participation of disabled women and girls in physical education and sport has increased in recent years but nevertheless remains lower than participation by non-disabled women and girls. Limited access to resources and activities leads in many countries to significant health disparities between women and girls with disabilities and those without. A recent study in the United States indicates that 93 per cent of women with physical disabilities report engaging in no physical activity, compared with 43 per cent of women without disabilities. The study also reported that the prevalence of chronic health conditions such as arthritis, diabetes and high blood pressure was 3 to 4 times higher in people with disabilities.<sup>98</sup> Recreational

## **Basketball for girls in Afghanistan**

The project "Basketball for Girls" was established in Afghanistan in 2001 to introduce and monitor basketball as an educational leisure activity for girls' schools. In commemoration of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education, the Sports Division of the Austrian Federal Chancellery, in partnership with the NGO Women Without Borders, implemented sport programmes as a tool for development cooperation by providing courts, uniforms and equipment to two girls' schools in Kabul. A Women Without Borders training handbook and sport empowerment brochure was tested and used, with 500 girls given the chance to practise basketball skills, compete in matches and train in teams.

*Source:* United Nations (2006). *Sport for a Better World: Report on the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005*, Geneva.



sport not only has a positive effect on disabled women's and girls' overall physical activity, but also contributes positively to their empowerment.<sup>99</sup> Participation of women and girls with disabilities in sport not only challenges gender stereotypes but can also challenge prejudices about disabilities and impairments.

The low level of participation by disabled women is in part a reflection of the double discrimination that disabled women face, both as disabled persons and as women. Greater physical and communication barriers are faced by disabled women, such as the lack of access to appropriate facilities and technological aides, including sporting wheelchairs, prostheses, special materials for blind women such as tandems, ringing balls and sign language interpretation.<sup>100</sup> The lack of equipment and accessible training facilities can be linked to negative attitudes towards women and girls with disabilities.<sup>101</sup> In order to reduce the marginalization of disabled women and girls, their specific needs, for example for accessible infrastructure and suitable sporting equipment, should be taken into account in local, national and international sport programmes and initiatives.

Practical interventions must ensure that locations, facilities and equipment are accessible to women and girls with all types of disabilities, that is, by ensuring that those who use wheelchairs can access buildings, locker rooms, bathrooms, and activity or meeting areas; that those who are deaf or hearing-impaired can have access to sign language interpreters; that those who are blind or have low vision have tactile access and visual activities or images described to them;<sup>102</sup> and that women and girls with learning disabilities can access safe, adapted sport environments. Guthrie and Castelnovo (2001) observe that "in order to produce the greatest good for the greatest number, more opportunities for women with disabilities in both sport and exercise must be made available, and those that do exist must be made more accessible and accommodating".<sup>103</sup>

### Self-defence for women and girls with disabilities

International Training Advice and Research (ITAR) has organized many self-defence courses for women and girls with disabilities in Europe and the United States. These courses are targeted at the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities through physical activities and include specific teachers' training courses for female martial arts and self-defence trainers. Women Win—a women sports fund from the Netherlands—is financing a teachers' training project in Malaysia for women and girls with disabilities, in collaboration with Women's Sports and Fitness Foundation Malaysia (WSFFM). The training is provided by a highly ranked martial arts wheelchair-using woman teacher.

*Source:* Lydia la Rivière-Zijdel, 3rd Degree Black Belt Karate and 1st Degree Black Belt Aikido and self-defence instructor. Women Win—<http://www.womenwin.org>

The lack of research and data on women with disabilities in sport hinders efforts to develop programmes and initiatives which take into account their needs and priorities. It is, for example, difficult to assess the global situation of women and girls with disabilities in sport at recreational and competitive levels.<sup>104</sup> The empowering effect of sport on women and girls with disabilities should be further investigated. Increasing research and data collection must be given priority.

Externally funded sport projects for disabled persons in developing countries do not always reach disabled women and girls. There is seldom sufficient attention to gender perspectives in projects and, as a result, disabled men and boys benefit to a greater extent than women and girls. Sport development programmes in developing countries should incorporate specific attention to gender perspectives and disability in order to ensure that they reach disabled women and girls.<sup>105</sup>

### The Cambodia women's wheelchair racing team

The Battambang Ladies Racing Team, established in 2007 through collaboration of the Cambodian National Volleyball League (Disabled) Organization (CNVLD), the ICRC Battambang Rehabilitation Centre and WomenSport International, is the first of its kind in Cambodia. The CNVLD will establish more female teams in provincial locations in 2008. The Battambang Ladies Racing Team became the first All-Female team in the ANZ Royal–CNVLD Wheelie Grand Prix. The five-member team trained to compete in the ANZ Royal–CNVLD 2nd Round Competition in September 2007.

The collaboration between CNVLD and ANZ Royal, the Cambodian subsidiary of one of Australia's leading corporate bodies, demonstrates that long-term partnership between local sports organizations and the corporate sector can be an effective path to sustainable sport development. The programme also illustrates that sport as a catalyst for social change in post-conflict nations is an exceptionally valuable tool, when issues such as a culture of violence, weak social cohesion, high unemployment, disadvantaged youth and a high percentage of disability per capita can threaten to undermine efforts to bring about stability.

*Source:* ANZ Royal CNVLD Wheelie Grand Prix Welcomes First All-female Team (2007). Cambodian National Volleyball League (Disabled). Website. Available from <http://www.standupcambodia.org/blog/?p=1062>

In terms of participation of disabled women in international competitions, 47 per cent of the nations competing in the 1996 Paralympic Games brought no women athletes, compared to 13 per cent of nations that brought no women athletes to the Olympic Games. In 2004, a record 31 per cent of participants in the Summer Paralympic Games in Athens were women, but this was still below the 40 per cent participation of women in the 2004 Olympic Games.<sup>106</sup>

The Women in Sport Committee of the International Paralympic Committee provides advice and consultation on issues of gender equality in Paralympic sport. The role of the Committee is to: advocate for the full inclusion of women and girls at all levels of Paralympic sport; identify barriers that restrict participation; make policy recommendations to address these barriers; and oversee the implementation of initiatives.

The Committee also oversees the Women in Paralympic Sport Network, which aims to mobilize the worldwide Paralympic community to increase access to Paralympic sport for women and girls. In 2005, two summits were held for the Africa region in Niger and Tanzania, which produced a regional action plan to effectively incorporate women into Paralympic sport.<sup>107</sup> In

### Promoting women's participation in the Paralympic Games

The International Paralympic Committee's Sport Technical Department promoted women's participation in the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney focusing on women in the allocation of sport wildcards, adding more events and disciplines for women, and raising awareness of issues related to women and sport among the leadership of national Paralympic committees.

*Source:* International Paralympic Committee (2006). *IPC women in sport leadership toolkit: Increasing opportunities for women in Paralympic sport*. Bonn, Germany: IPC. Available from [http://www.paralympic.org/release/Main\\_Sections\\_Menu/IPC/Organization/Standing\\_Committees/Commission\\_Women\\_Sport/WISC.html](http://www.paralympic.org/release/Main_Sections_Menu/IPC/Organization/Standing_Committees/Commission_Women_Sport/WISC.html)

December 2004, the Network's first regional summit for the Middle East was organized by the National Paralympic Committee of Iran, where an action plan for the region was developed that will create new opportunities in Paralympic sport for women and girls in the region.<sup>108</sup>

The International Paralympic Committee set targets for the numbers of male and female athletes in the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, with a quota of 65 per cent men and 35 per cent women. This total participation quota was also broken down into targets for individual categories of sport. Two disciplines—sitting volleyball and wheelchair fencing—currently have equal participation targets for men and women. However, other disciplines

reflect traditional gender segregation in sport. For example, there is no quota for female athletes in football and the quota for male athletes in judo is almost twice that of female athletes. Equestrian events are the only discipline with higher quotas for women.<sup>109</sup>

The International Paralympic Committee has acknowledged that it has given priority to the participation of disabled women in sport at the elite level and that more needs to be done to increase participation and access at the grass-roots and recreational levels, which in turn will allow more women with disabilities to proceed to international competitions.<sup>110</sup> Improving participation at the grass-roots level can bring the benefits of participation in sport and physical education to local disabled women and girls, including improved physical and mental health, development of social skills, building of social networks, and expanded opportunities for education and employment.

### Developing female leaders within the Paralympic Movement

The International Paralympic Committee organizes Women in Sport Leadership Regional Summits and National Trainings in all regions to encourage full participation of women with disabilities and acknowledge their right to be leaders within the Paralympic Movement. It has developed a blueprint for action on gender equality in paralympic sport and calls for commitments for action to facilitate increased participation by girls and women. Leadership Summits have been organized in Africa—in Tanzania (2005) and Kenya (2006) and in the Niger (2006). A pilot Regional Summit for Asia was held in Tehran, Iran, in 2004. The first European Summit was held in Bonn in 2007.

*Source:* International Paralympic Committee (2007). *Developing Female Leaders Within the Paralympic Movement*. Bonn, Germany. Available from [http://www.paralympic.org/release/Main\\_Sections\\_Menu/Development/Development\\_Programmes/WIS/index.html](http://www.paralympic.org/release/Main_Sections_Menu/Development/Development_Programmes/WIS/index.html)

### Women's leadership and decision-making

Throughout the world, women's participation in leadership and decision-making remains limited in sport and sport-related organizations. Women are underrepresented at all levels, including in coaching, management, commercial sporting activities and the media, as well as in decision-making bodies at the local, national, regional and international levels, including the International

Olympic Committee. To give an example of one country, in the Czech Republic: only 8 per cent (33 women) of all members of executive boards in Czech sport federations are women; only 3 women have ever been members of the executive board of the Czech Olympic Committee in its 105-year history; and only 21 per cent of elite athletes are coached by women.<sup>111</sup>

The lessons learned from efforts to increase women's participation in political decision-making show that many of the gains made can be attributed to affirmative action, such as quotas, established in constitutions, by legislation or through temporary special measures. Targets do work, although incentives as well as sanctions for non-compliance are often needed to ensure their effectiveness.

In 1997, as part of its Women and Sport policy, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) established targets to increase the number of women occupying leadership and administrative positions within the Olympic Movement. By 31 December 2005, the National Olympic Committees, International Sports Federations and sporting bodies belonging to the Olympic Movement should have established that at least 20 per cent of the positions in all their decision-making structures are held by women.

A study conducted in January 2004 by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Institute of Sport & Leisure Policy at Loughborough University (UK) found that the introduction of targets in the IOC had a positive impact on the proportion of women in the Executive Committees of National Olympic Committees. Sixty-two per cent of National Olympic Committees (NOCs) had achieved the targets. As of December 2005, there were nine women NOC Presidents: five in Africa, three in Europe and one in the Americas; and there were 14 women Secretaries General: four in Europe, four in the Americas, three in Africa, two in Asia and one in Oceania. Africa is leading the way for women's leadership, and in 2005, the National Olympic Committee

### Targets for women's participation in sport decision-making

Progress in women's leadership at the International Olympic Committee was seen in 1997 when Anita DeFrantz became the first female vice-president of the IOC Executive Committee and Nawal El Moutawakel, appointed as Minister of Sport and Youth in Morocco that same year, became the first Muslim woman ever elected as a member of the IOC.

*Source:* Promotion of women sports leaders (2007). Official website of the Olympic Movement. Available from [http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/women/activities/leaders\\_uk.asp](http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/women/activities/leaders_uk.asp)

of Zambia became the second in the world to elect women as both President and Secretary General.<sup>112</sup> The study recognized that it is critical not to view targets as ceilings for women's participation, but as minimum requirements for women's representation.

The study found that, in terms of impact, women on these committees had influenced ongoing policy debates on women and sport, and the Secretaries General of various National Olympic Committees indicated that women were among the most active members of the Executive Committees. The benefits cited by the women committee members included the increases in women's influence in the National Olympic Committees, in participation of women in leadership training, in appointment of women to other committees, and in the general profile of women in sport.<sup>113</sup>

The study identified a number of constraints to women's participation in leadership and decision-making, including the challenge of getting women nominated and elected from a constituency of National Federations whose representatives were predominantly and traditionally male. Furthermore, the targets were limited to only one part of the Olympic decision-making structure—the National Olympic Committees—and more work is needed to increase women's participation at all levels. There was also recognition that successful implementation of the targets will not necessarily lead to policy changes in support of women's increased participation in decision-making.

### Promoting women's leadership in national strategies for women and sport

Women and Sport South Africa, a national strategy launched in 1996, is aimed at empowering women to be actively involved in all spheres of sport and recreation. In particular, it targets governmental and non-governmental agencies in South Africa to develop a culture where all girls and women have equal opportunities, equal access, and equal support in sport and recreation at all levels and in all capacities, as decision-makers, administrators, coaches, officials and participants.

*Source:* Oglesby, Carole A., in collaboration with the International Working Group on Women and Sport, WomenSport International, the International Association of Physical Education for Women and Girls, and the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (2006). *Positive Embodiment: Contributions of Sport, Exercise and Physical Recreation to the Life-long Development of Girls and Women*. (Brief prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women.)

In addition to targets and quotas, a number of other approaches are important in promoting the participation of women and girls in sport leadership and decision-making, including skills training and recognition of achieve-

ments. Men's leadership on this issue is critical. The Chairperson of the International Olympic Committee's Women and Sport Commission, Anita DeFrantz, has highlighted the need for women and men to work together to achieve the goals set for women's participation in sport leadership.<sup>114</sup> Such cooperation can help to achieve the benefits of women's increased participation in decision-making in sport for both women and men, including the diversification of the talent pool among coaches, managers, administrators and other officials.

A number of international and regional meetings and conferences have explored women's participation in sport leadership and decision-making. The International Paralympic Committee regularly addresses this issue in its regional "Women in Sport Leadership Summits", which have been held in the Middle East, Africa and Europe. In October 2005, a conference on "Effecting social change through women's leadership in sport" was held in the United States as part of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. The conference, hosted by Kennesaw State University, in association with the United States Olympic Committee and the International Labour Organization (ILO), included programmes on: fostering socio-economic improvement through the perspective of women's leadership; the role of media in shaping society's perception of women; and facilitating women in leadership positions that make an impact on society.<sup>115</sup>

Educational role modelling as a means to reach community youth was a special focus of the conference. Positive role models are recognized as an important way to increase participation of women and girls in sport and sport leadership. Long-term mentorship is also important, as the encouragement and moral support offered through such relationships are key factors in providing an enabling environment for increased participation in this area.

### Sport as a platform to advance women's leadership in all spheres

UNESCO and the Sony Ericsson Women's Tennis Association Tour announced a landmark global partnership in 2006, which marked a new level of commitment to raise awareness of gender equality issues and advance opportunities for women's leadership in all spheres of society. Activities planned included a fund for women's leadership; appointment of global "Promoters of Gender Equality"; mentoring, scholarship and fellowship programmes; and the use of UNESCO and Sony Ericsson WTA Tour events as awareness and fund-raising platforms. Tennis star Venus Williams, the first global Promoter of Gender Equality, noted that "our goal is to let women and girls throughout the world know that there are no glass ceilings, and to do our part to support programs that provide real opportunities for women to succeed in whatever they set their minds to."

*Source:* UNESCO (2006). "UNESCO and Sony Ericsson WTA Tour announce Global Partnership to Advance Gender Equality." Press release. 12 November. Available from [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=35640&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35640&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

### Employment opportunities

An enabling environment is also necessary to improve the access of women to sport-related employment. A wide range of opportunities for employment exists in the world of sport, as coaches, managers, sport administrators, trainers, game officials, physical education teachers, sports therapists, journalists and editors. Positions also exist in the commercial sporting industry, in areas such as sport marketing and branding. Women's participation in all these fields of sport-related employment is low. The poor representation of women in sport-related employment is not a reflection of the number of working women in the world today; women represent more than 40 per cent of working people worldwide.<sup>116</sup>

Many barriers to equitable employment opportunities remain, including stereotypical attitudes towards women and sport. A recent example in the United States was a derogatory remark made by a prominent New York Mets broadcaster about women's presence in baseball dugouts: "I won't say that women belong in the kitchen, but they don't belong in the dugout". A posi-

tive outcome of this incident was the criticism that his remark drew from a wide variety of sources, and the attention given to the fact that the woman in question was the first woman to be employed full-time in a major-league club's training room.

In Canada, for example, more than 95 per cent of an estimated 1.2 million coaches work at the community level. In community-level softball, hockey and soccer, it is estimated that less than 5 per cent of the coaches are women, even though the number of female participants in these sports at the community level is growing significantly.<sup>117</sup>

A number of initiatives are under way to encourage and promote women's work in all sectors of the sporting industry. At the policy level, the Brighton Declaration calls upon sports and sports-related organizations to develop policies, programmes and design structures that increase the number of women coaches, advisers, decision-makers, officials, administrators and sport personnel at all levels with special attention given to recruitment, development and retention.<sup>118</sup>

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), in cooperation with Olympic Solidarity, established a programme of



regional seminars for female administrators, coaches, technical officials and journalists in the national and international sport movement. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has also been active in promoting women's employment in the sport sector. It adopted women in sport as the theme for its 2006 celebrations for International Women's Day and held a panel discussion to explore gender equality issues in the sport-related employment sector.<sup>119</sup>

In some countries, progress has been made through legal channels to lift some of the barriers to women's careers in sport-related areas. For example, in 1978, Melissa Ludtke of *Sports Illustrated*, a highly recognized periodical of American sport, filed a lawsuit in which a United States District Court judge ruled that male and female reporters should have the same access to athletes, even if it means entering locker rooms while athletes are dressing.<sup>120</sup>

### **Providing skills for a career in international sport**

The second Sport Management Seminar for Women, organized by the International Academy of Sports Science and Technology (AISTS), took place in June 2006 in Lausanne, Switzerland. A total of 51 women representing 38 nationalities took part in this four-day education programme organized to provide women in sport management with a solid understanding of the key skills needed to pursue a successful career in international sport. The seminar included workshops and lectures on sport marketing, sponsorship and media; project management; and communication, teamwork and leadership.

*Source:* International Academy of Sports Science and Technology. Website: <http://www.aists.org/events.htm>

### **Women in coaching**

The Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) launched the "We are coaches" campaign in February 2006 to increase the number of women coaching at the community level from 5 per cent to 10 per cent in three years. As part of the initiative, participating women will receive quality coach training in certain sports through the National Coaching Certification Programme. CAC anticipates expansion of the programme to include at least 15 additional sports and many more communities in the second year, and to increase the number of sports and communities again in the third year.

*Source:* "The Coaching Association of Canada launches a three-year campaign to increase the number of women coaches at the community level." In *Canada Sports News Online*, 7 February 2006. Available from [http://www.canadiansport.ca/news/news\\_view\\_e.cfm?id=9449&search=&show=&month=&year=&search\\_where](http://www.canadiansport.ca/news/news_view_e.cfm?id=9449&search=&show=&month=&year=&search_where)

### **Supporting women's professional development in sport**

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), in cooperation with Olympic Solidarity, established a programme of regional seminars for female administrators, coaches, technical officials and journalists in the national and international sport movement. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has also been active in promoting women's employment in the sport sector. It adopted women in sport as the theme for its 2006 celebrations for International Women's Day and held a panel discussion to explore gender equality issues in the sport employment sector.

*Source:* Support Activities. Official website of the Olympic Movement. Available from [http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/women/activities/activities\\_uk.asp](http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/women/activities/activities_uk.asp)

### **Women's sport and the media**

The gender-based discrimination against women in sport-related employment is also apparent in the unequal representation of women in sport media, and the negative portrayal of women athletes and women's sports remains a persistent problem. In addition, women's sporting events remain marginalized from the mainstream multi-billion dollar sport-media industry and while many local, national and international competitions include both men's and women's events, the men's events invariably dominate media coverage and local and global attention. For example, in the United States, the media coverage ratio in 2004 between male and female professional sporting

events was 95 to 1 in television and 20 to 1 in print media.<sup>121</sup>

In Australia, a 1996 study conducted by the Australian Sports Commission found that coverage of women's sport was just two per cent of total sport broadcasting in television, 1.4 per cent in radio and 6.8 per cent in sport magazines. Newspaper reportage of women's sport was higher at 10.7 per cent.<sup>122</sup> When the South Australian Premier's Council for Women commissioned similar research in 2006, it found that newspaper coverage was just 4.1 per cent, despite a number of high-profile women's sporting events held during the study period.<sup>123</sup>

Frank Deford, a senior writer for *Sports Illustrated*, has argued that coverage of sport is dictated by what people want to see. He maintains that

there is little coverage of women's sport because women do not support female athletes nearly as much as men support male athletes.<sup>124</sup> The Women's Sports Foundation has, however, noted that there is no evidence to support the contention that women are not as interested in sport as men.<sup>125</sup>

Frank Deford has also suggested that although individual female athletes are able to command attention, women's team sporting events do not because men cannot conceive of women representing them, for example when supporters closely associate their own identity with a college or professional team. He has recommended that major women's competitions, such as the national Collegiate Basketball Championships in the United States, should be moved to a different month in the year so that they do not have to compete with the men's events.<sup>126</sup> The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) has already been moved to a summer season.<sup>127</sup>

Media representation and portrayal of men's and women's sport are also significantly different. Media coverage of women's sport continues to be influenced by gender stereotypes, which reinforce traditional images of men and women. Numerous research studies have, for example, shown that in sport media, women are frequently portrayed as "girls", no matter what their age, and described in terms of their physical attributes and emotional responses, often in ways that stress their weakness, passivity and insignificance.<sup>128</sup> Such gender stereotyping can have a powerful influence on the younger generation's perceptions and attitudes towards women and gender equality. In this context, the findings of a research study conducted on gender-specific images in *Sports Illustrated for Kids* are particularly disheartening. The study showed that stereotypical masculine and feminine ideologies continued to dominate the magazine, even when progress in gender equality in sport has been achieved and cultural acceptance and expectations of women in sport have evolved.<sup>129</sup>

### Sport media and stereotypes

Austria, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania and Norway have taken part in a cross-European research project initiative, "Sport media and stereotypes—women and men in sport and media", to explore similarities and variations in representations of women and men in sport. The initiative aims to promote change in gender stereotypes in sport by raising awareness among influential target groups about the impact of representation of male and female athletes, particularly in the media, and how it creates and maintains traditional images of women and men.

*Source:* The 2005 United Nations International Year of Sport and Physical Education: Austrian Projects. Available from <http://sport.austria.gv.at/Docs/2005/7/8/UN%20Year%20of%20Sport%20&%20Physical%20Education%20Austrian%20Projects.doc?wai=true>

The coverage, marketing and promotion of women's sport are also often highly sexualized. The value of the female athlete is often determined in terms of her body type, attractiveness and sex appeal, rather than in terms of the qualities that define her as an athlete. Donna Lopiano, the former Chief Executive of the Women's Sport Foundation in the United States, says that the sports media culture is "deciding what sells, and they're not willing to sell legitimate female athletic achievement".<sup>130</sup>

This approach is sometimes imposed on female athletes but may also be used voluntarily as a strategy to gain media coverage. For example, in 2000, the Australian national women's soccer team, the Matildas, launched a nude calendar to generate publicity and increase their public profile.<sup>131</sup> Capitalizing on attractiveness is one way that women athletes are earning more money and corporate sponsorships, but it is argued that the enhanced sexualization of female athletes diminishes their accomplishments and reinforces the image of women as sex objects, which is harmful to all women.<sup>132</sup>

Male athletes are also taking advantage of the commercialization of the sporting industry—as seen by clothing collections of male sport stars such as Björn Borg (Sweden) and Ian Thorpe (Australia). However, Dr. Mary Jo Kane, Director of the University of Minnesota's Tucker Center for Research on

Girls and Women in Sport, noted that while the number of sexualized images of male athletes is far outweighed by pictures depicting men simply as great athletes, this is not the case for women.<sup>133</sup> Female athletes can also be sexualized through official game rules, which sometimes require revealing uniforms, even when there is no functional purpose. This has been referred to as exploitation.<sup>134</sup>

### Promoting women in sport media

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Hungary funded a promotional programme for women in sport with a specially designed logo and the slogan "Keep in Shape". The programme includes weekly women of sport pages in a daily newspaper, articles in sport magazines and a weekly television health and lifestyle programme. The Ministry also produced a 30-minute programme on the "History of Women in Sports" for national television.

*Source:* International Working Group on Women and Sport (2002). *Women and Sport Progress Report 1998-2002*. Bonn, Germany. Available from [http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3\\_america.htm](http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/worldwide/chapter3_america.htm)

The promotion and popularization of women's sport requires an increase in media coverage as well as a significant improvement in the breadth, depth and quality of women's sport media, as called for in the 1998 Windhoek Call for Action. Non-discriminatory portrayal of female athletes in sport media and marketing could not only provide positive role models that encourage more women and girls to become athletes, but it could also persuade more women to become consumers of sport media and other products, as well as positively influence gender stereotypes and the sexualization of women in all areas of society.

### **Violence against women, exploitation and sexual harassment**

A further impact of the sexualization of women athletes is increased harassment, exploitation and violence against women.<sup>135</sup> Studies conducted in a number of countries give some indication of the prevalence of violence and harassment in sport: 40-50 per cent of female athletes surveyed in Canada and 27 per cent in Australia reported harassment.<sup>136</sup> A study of Australian athletes found that 31 per cent of female and 21 per cent of male athletes reported experiencing sexual abuse at some time in their lives. Of these, 41 per cent of females and 29 per cent of males had been sexually abused within the sport environment.<sup>137</sup> A Norwegian research project administered by the Norwegian Olympic Committee from 1995-2000 found that 28 per cent of female athletes had experienced sexual harassment in a sporting context. The study also showed that female athletes had experienced sexual harassment from both women (15 per cent) and men (45 per cent), either in or outside of the sport setting.<sup>138</sup> Young athletes are particularly vulnerable. In the United States, adolescents made up 31 per cent of cases of harassment, and in Denmark, 25 per cent of sportswomen under 18 reported harassment or know-

ing someone close to them who had been harassed.<sup>139</sup>

Women and girls may face verbal harassment, including of a sexual nature, which can originate from other athletes, coaches, managers, spectators, and family or community members. For example, girls playing football in the Mathare Youth Sports Association programme in Kenya spoke of the taunts and jeers of the boys who teased them as they walked in the community and of the risk of being harassed by street boys who were present near the playing field.<sup>140</sup>

The risk of violence and harassment may stem from men's resistance to the challenging of gender-specific boundaries and assertion of women's independence, or may occur because women are participating in sport viewed as male domains. For example, one of the girls in the Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) programme in Kenya noted, "When I started playing for MYSA my father would say that there is no football for girls, and he would beat me up. So whenever I wanted to go and play, my mother would cover up for me by saying that she had sent me somewhere."<sup>141</sup> Such attitudes can sometimes be altered if the sport takes place within school grounds, rather than in other facilities, as parents may see schools as safer environments for their daughters to practise sport.

Verbal and physical harassment by coaches and managers, such as derogatory remarks and inappropriate looks or touching, is a particular concern. A study in the Czech Republic found that 45 per cent of female athletes had experienced sexual harassment from someone in sport, 27 per cent noting harassment from a coach.<sup>142</sup> In Canada, 21.8 per cent of female athletes surveyed reported relationships with a sporting authority figure, 23 per cent of whom were under 16 years of age and 8.6 per cent of whom felt obligated to enter into the relationship.<sup>143</sup> A survey conducted during a marathon in Mexico revealed that 71 per cent of the 150 respondents had been a victim, or knew someone who had been

a victim, of harassment in sport. Of those, 67 per cent said the abuser was the trainer and 92 per cent said that the harassment took place in a sport facility or workplace.<sup>144</sup>

Violence, exploitation and abuse in the context of sport are of concern for all women, not only women athletes. The notion of masculinity based on men's dominance, physical strength and power that is traditionally enhanced by male sport can manifest into violence against all women. Such notions of masculinity may be a factor in the increasing levels of sexual violence committed by male athletes. Negative conduct, however, does not seem to have had an impact on the popularity of male sport stars, as recognized by United States sports commentator Frank Deford:

"Hardly a week goes by it seems without some pro or college star being hauled up on some brutal charge against a woman. It is risky to try to explain this simply, but certainly part of this sorry trend can be accounted for by the fact that athletes are now given so much, and forgiven so much, and from so early on, that they become imbued with a sense of entitlement previously only found with royal princes of the realm. After a while it is hard to believe that anybody will turn you down, particularly any woman. Yet while there is a lot of bemoaning about the athletes' violence towards women, has it affected the popularity of any sport, especially the NBA [National Basketball Association], where misconduct of all kinds appears most abundant? . . . Until we see evidence to the contrary, we can continue to assume that how pro-athletes treat women is simply not germane so long as they treat the games we love with respect and devotion."<sup>145</sup>

The link between international sporting events and prostitution, and the use of human trafficking to fill the demand, is a further concern relating to the exploitation of women in the context of sport. While the link between sporting events and human trafficking is often made, a representative of Ban Ying, an

NGO assisting prostitutes from South-east Asia, reports that the organization and money required to traffic large numbers of women into a country for a short-term event would be too much of an investment, particularly given the large police presence.<sup>146</sup> Interpol has noted, however, that “prostitution networks set up specific organizations to take advantage of major sporting events” and, for example, an increase in prostitution was detected during the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Confederations Cup in 2005.<sup>147</sup>

A research project by the International Organization for Migration on trafficking and the 2006 World Cup found that although data on trafficking is limited, all information available strongly indicated that an increase in trafficking during and after the World Cup did not occur. Prevention campaigns by the German Government and local and international NGOs, as well as increased police focus, may have positively contributed to this development. For example, a range of initiatives were implemented including multilingual hotlines, shelters for victims of trafficking, and outreach activities to women in their home countries. The study also noted that the characteristics of the fan community and the overall setting of the World Cup 2006 played an important role, as many of the fans included families with children.<sup>148</sup> Unfortunately, attempts to prevent human trafficking in these contexts can lead to further discrimination against women, as illustrated in the proposal to impose special visa requirements for women visitors from some non-European Union countries as a measure to address the trafficking of women for the purpose of prostitution at the World Cup.<sup>149</sup>

Prevention of violence, harassment and exploitation in sport is gradually being addressed at both policy and operational levels. For example, the recommendation on discrimination against women and girls in sport passed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2005 calls for the combating of sexual abuse in relation

to sport.<sup>150</sup> This followed on from the Council of Europe resolution passed in 2000 on the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of women, young people and children in sport (3/2000), which resolved to commission research on the phenomena, prepare a national policy and suggest actions for implementation.<sup>151</sup>

The International Olympic Committee’s Executive Committee adopted a consensus position statement on Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport in February 2007. It was prepared by a group of experts/researchers at a seminar in Lausanne in October 2006. The statement defines the problems, identifies the risk factors and provides guidelines for prevention and resolution. The objective is to improve the health and protection of athletes through the promotion of effective preventive policy, as well as to increase the awareness of these problems among all stakeholders and actors in sport. The recommendations include:

- Adopting harassment-free policies and procedures that are in line with international ethical and human rights statutes, and that are inclusive;
- Encouraging open debate about sexual harassment, homophobia and exploitation of women and men in sport;
- Embedding an equitable balance of males and females in all roles and democratic leadership styles to mitigate against abuses of power;
- Acting as advocates of harassment-free sport through education and training programmes for everyone involved in sport;
- Actively monitoring the effectiveness of all anti-harassment initiatives;
- Initiating research into men’s, women’s and boys’ and girls’ experiences of abuse and bullying within sport; and
- Giving active representation to athletes in decision-making at every level of sport.<sup>152</sup>

A group of experts on women and sport, Kari Fasting (Norway), Celia Brackenridge (England), Sandi Kirby (Canada) and Trisha Leahy (Hong Kong), have also been contracted by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence to prepare a digest on violence against children in sport.

A great deal remains to be done to combat exploitation, harassment and violence against women in sport. For example, affordable and reliable transportation, appropriate hours for events, and safe sporting locations are all important criteria for increasing the safety of women and girls when participating in sport, especially when scheduled practice or competition times finish after dark. Further efforts should include research, awareness-raising and advocacy; the adoption of harassment-free pol-

### **Combating harassment and violence against women and girls by coaches**

WomenSport International encourages all sport organizations to establish codes of ethics and conduct for coaches; foster a climate of open discussion about sexual harassment and abuse; develop athlete autonomy wherever possible; incorporate the issues of sexual harassment and abuse into coach education programmes; introduce reporting and mediation systems; and adopt rigorous screening procedures for the appointment of all personnel.

*Source:* WomenSport International (WSI) Task Forces. *The Sexual Harassment Task Force: Brochure on Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport.* WomenSport International. United States: WomenSport International. Available from [http://www.sportsbiz.bz/womensportinternational/taskforces/harassment\\_brochure.htm](http://www.sportsbiz.bz/womensportinternational/taskforces/harassment_brochure.htm)



icies and procedures; the promotion of women in coaching, management and other leadership positions; and access to open channels of redress.<sup>153</sup> A system of impunity must not be allowed to perpetuate harassment, exploitation and violence against women and girls in sport.

### **Where to now: conclusions and recommendations**

A range of actors are taking actions to address discrimination and inequalities in sport, including governments, the United Nations system, sporting institutions and NGOs. Common strategies include awareness-raising, advocacy and gender-sensitive policy-making and programming, using both gender-mainstreaming approaches and women-specific initiatives. However, the extent of the problem of discrimination against women and girls in sport demands further action, and successful strategies and programmes must be scaled up and expanded.

Gender mainstreaming in sport is essential and requires that sporting bodies and institutions identify and explicitly address the relevant gender perspectives in all areas of their activities, for example, in policy development, planning processes, budget procedures, human resources development—including recruitment, promotion, retention and training—and in research and statistics. The mainstreaming of gender perspectives into all sport policies and programmes will require a deeper understanding of the barriers women and girls may face in accessing, participating in and benefiting from sport and physical activity, and the identification of ways to address them. For example, establishing appropriate physical resources and infrastructure, developing equitable rules and regulations, and raising awareness

on the benefits of sport and the capabilities of women and girls are all useful strategies for bringing about change.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that gender mainstreaming does not eliminate the need for targeted activities focused on women and girls. Resources, responsibilities and power are not equitably allocated between women and girls and men and boys. Given the significance of the gender gaps in many areas of sport, redressing this situation will continue to require affirmative action and the development of specific targeted programmes for women and girls for some time to come.

The foundations of a sound action framework for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in sport are already in place. Bodies at international, regional and national levels, in particular the women and sport movement, have made major efforts to provide clear policy recommendations to redress the imbalances women and girls face in their involvement in all areas and at all levels of sport. They have also worked to accelerate the process of change, in particular through advocacy, research and data collection, and monitoring and reporting progress. There are, however, a number of areas in which this framework can be significantly strengthened and expanded, including through gender-sensitive resource allocations; establishing higher targets for women's participation in decision-making and leadership, and enhancing follow-up of these targets; and developing and implementing policies and codes of conduct in relation to violence, exploitation and harassment in sport. Action plans are needed at all levels that provide concrete guidance on what needs to be done and by which actors, and that also outline timelines, concrete targets, resource implications, and monitoring and reporting requirements.

A twin-track approach on sport for women and girls with disabilities is necessary, that is, ensuring that issues of women and girls with disabilities are systematically mainstreamed into

all aspects of sport policies and programmes, and providing specific tailored support where appropriate. This approach is essential to ensure that women and girls with disabilities participate fully, enjoy the benefits of both recreational and competitive sport, and are empowered through the process.

In relation to women's participation in decision-making, it is important to go beyond increasing numbers to enhancing the effectiveness and impact of women's participation, through increasing women's voice in shaping policies, resource allocations, and programme development and management. Women's access to promotion opportunities within sporting organizations at all levels should be assessed, and the types of support mechanisms required to increase these opportunities should be identified and provided. The impact of affirmative action measures must also be regularly assessed and strategies adjusted as necessary. Furthermore, databases on women leaders in sport are needed as a resource for those seeking candidates for leadership positions. Without such databases, organizations can continue to claim that there are no women with the necessary skills or experience willing to take up key positions.

Initiatives that address all forms of violence, exploitation and harassment are needed at a variety of levels, including within families, schools, sport teams, communities, and in local, national, regional and international competitions. There should be commitment to creating safe and supportive environments for women and girls to participate in sport. Improving safety and security requires, for example, attention to suitable locations; appropriate scheduling; and the design of gender-sensitive and disability-aware facilities that take into account the need for secure changing rooms and adequate lighting and transport. Initiatives must address a number of key issues such as gender stereotyping, power relationships between coaches and athletes, as well as the link between international sporting events and prostitution

and the risk of human trafficking to fill that demand.

A number of other critical areas need further attention. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of initiatives, such as the use of targets and quotas, need to be significantly strengthened. Reliable and comparable data are required, both as an advocacy and awareness-raising tool, and as a means to improve the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting on the implementation of policies and programmes. Improved means of disseminating data and statistics should be sought, including through the media. Initiatives are needed to build a good knowledge base on successful strategies and promising practices for increasing participation of women and girls in sport and promoting sport for gender equality.

Strategies that address the inadequate and often negative portrayal of women's sport in the media are essential. Attention should be paid not only to increasing coverage but also to improving the quality and style of media reporting. Efforts may include reducing the sexualized representation, marketing and promotion of women's sport, and changing the dominant stereotypical gender images to reflect the progress on gender equality in sport.

The establishment of positive role models and development of mentoring systems are important strategies. Positive role models and support are

not only required for girls and young women; there is also a critical need for gender-sensitive male athletes, coaches, journalists and other leaders to provide positive role models and support for boys and young men.

Organizational change is particularly important, including changes to organizational cultures, values, norms, rules and procedures. Practical aspects of organizational change can be critical to ensure women's full involvement, such as establishing appropriate meeting schedules and provision of childcare. Since the representation of women in sporting organizations is currently low, men in leadership positions have a major responsibility for promoting and sustaining the required organizational change.

A range of actors should be involved in and collaborating on promoting increased access, involvement and benefits for women and girls in all areas of sport. These include governments, public authorities, sporting organizations at the local, national and international levels, research and training institutions, women's organizations and networks, and development agencies. Individuals who are involved with promoting, conducting, researching, reporting on and in any way influencing sporting activities—such as coaches, trainers, managers, other officials, journalists and athletes themselves—should also be actively involved. A major challenge—which remains inad-

equately addressed—is identifying means of developing accountability of these key actors.

Men and boys also need to be targeted for training on gender equality in sport and the empowerment of women and girls. The women and sport movement should identify critical allies among male athletes, coaches, managers and other leaders, including in the media. Men must be encouraged to play a more visible supportive role. Follow-up to ensure the effectiveness of training programmes provided to both women and men is critical.

Other critical allies could also be identified, for example, in parliaments as well as in the national mechanisms established to promote gender equality and empowerment of women, such as women's ministries, gender equality commissions and ombudsperson offices.

The International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005 generated considerable attention to the issue of sport and development throughout the world. Now is the time to harness the momentum created by the International Year and ensure the systematic and effective integration of a gender perspective in all areas and at all levels of sport. Concerted efforts are needed by all key actors to move positions forward on gender equality in sport and on the empowerment of women and girls through sport.

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