
Women in a changing world of Sports

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Abstract

Sport and physical activity have not yet been used on a large scale as a strategy within women's movements. There are, however, already very positive stories to tell from both our program partners and those programs in our network. Based on the experiences of these partners, we have learned more about how participation in sport and physical activity can empower individual girls and women. Involvement in sport and physical activity can, for example, build life skills, confidence and body awareness and may create social networks, which result in dramatic positive life changes for participants. We have seen that involvement in sport and physical activity can positively change existing gender norms and help girls and women move into public spaces. Moreover, sport and physical activity programs provide opportunities to bring communities together and help realize development objectives relating to such issues as (post) conflict management, reproductive health and gender-based violence. This paper is attempts to find out all the possibilities to empower women through Sports.

Key words: - Gender, Discrimination, Empowerment,

Introduction

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.

Historical Perspective: - The IOC is committed to gender equality in sport. The Olympic Charter states that one of the roles of the IOC 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" - (Rule 2, paragraph 7). Its commitment extends well beyond its efforts to increase women's participation in the Olympic Games. The IOC also recognizes that gender equality is a critical component of effective sports administration and continues to support the promotion of women and girls in sport at all levels and structures.

WOMEN IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES Women first took part in the Olympic Games in Paris in 1900, four years after the first Olympic Games of the modern era in Athens. Despite the reticence of the reviver of the modern Games, Pierre de Coubertin, 22 women out of a total of 997 athletes competed in just five sports: tennis, sailing, croquet, equestrian and golf. But only golf and tennis had events for women only. Female participation has increased steadily since then, with women accounting for more than 44 per cent of the participants at the 2012 Games in London, compared with 23 per cent at the Games in 1984 in Los Angeles and just over 13 per cent at the 1964 Games in Tokyo. In the last 20 years, the IOC has also increased the number of women's events on the Olympic programme, in cooperation with the International Federations (IFs) and the Organising Committees. With the addition of women's boxing, the 2012 Olympic Games in London were the first in which women competed in

every sport on the Olympic program. Also, since 1991, all new sports wishing to be included on the Olympic program must feature women's events.

INTRODUCTION OF WOMEN IN OLYMPICS – SPORTS YEAR SPORTS 1900 Tennis, Golf 1904 Archery 1908 Tennis*, Skating 1912 Aquatics 1924 Fencing 1928 Athletics, Gymnastics 1936 Skiing 1948 Canoe-Kayak 1952 Equestrian 1964 Volleyball, Luge 1976 Rowing, Basketball, Handball 1980 Hockey 1984 Shooting, Cycling 1988 Tennis*, Table Tennis, Sailing 1992 Badminton, Judo, Biathlon 1996 Football, Softball 1998 Curling, Ice Hockey 2000 Weightlifting, Modern Pentathlon, Taekwondo, Triathlon 2002 Bobsleigh 2004 Wrestling 2012 Boxing 2016 Golf*, Rugby * Sports which were re-introduced within the Olympic Program. **WOMEN IN SPORTS ADMINISTRATION** While the participation of women in physical activities and the Olympic Games has steadily increased, the percentage of women in governing and administrative bodies of the Olympic Movement has remained low. **OBJECTIVES** To remedy this situation, the IOC set the following objectives: The NOCs, IFs, National Federations and sporting bodies belonging to the Olympic Movement must set the objective of reserving at least 20% of decision-making positions for women (particularly in all executive and legislative bodies) within their structures by the end of 2005. This objective was not achieved in a certain number of NOCs. Twenty-seven NOCs (of 135 who participated in the IOC survey) have 30 per cent or more women on their Executive Board. 62 NOCs have less than 20% women on their Executive Boards and 10 NOCs still have no women on their Executive Board. However, a first objective (having at least 10% of women in decision-making positions by December 2000) was met by more than 61% of NOCs and 52% of IFs. The IOC is nevertheless aware that such an objective can be attained only in successive stages. A number of NOCs and IFs have already shown their willingness to work on achieving parity between men and women.

WOMEN IN THE IOC - The first two women, the Venezuelan Flor IsavaFonseca and Norwegian Pirjo Haeggman were co-opted as IOC members in 1981. As of May 2014, 24 women are active IOC members out of 106 (around 22.6%). Four women are honorary members. In 1990, for the first time in the history of the IOC, a woman was elected on to the Executive Board (Flor Isava Fonseca), and in 1997, another woman, Anita DeFrantz, became an IOC Vice-President (1997-2001). In 2004 Gunilla Lindberg was also elected as IOC VicePresident. Olympic champion Nawal El Moutawakel from Morocco was elected as a member of the IOC Executive Board in 2008 and IOC Vice-President in July 2012. . In 2013, four women (26.6%) are members of the IOC Executive Board: Nawal El Moutawakel, Gunilla Lindberg, Claudia Bokel and Anita L. DeFrantz More and more women are chairing IOC commissions, such as the Coordination Commissions for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games and the 2nd Winter Youth Olympic Games in 2016 in Lillehammer, as well as the Women and Sport Commission and Athletes' Commission. **WOMEN IN NOCS AND IFS** Women are increasingly taking leading roles within NOCs, albeit at a slower pace than female athletes are being accommodated on the competition field. Actually, 11 NOCs are headed by female presidents. A further 30 females served as secretaries general and several more as vice-presidents, deputy secretaries general, treasurers and deputy treasurers in the executive committees of the 204 NOCs. The International Sports Federations (IFs) are making more effort to increase the number of women on their decision-making bodies. IOC Recognized Federations are leading the way, with around 26 per cent of their executive boards made up of women, while Winter and Summer IFs' governing bodies are made up of around 17 per cent women **THE IOC WOMEN AND SPORT**

COMMISSION Created in 1995, the IOC's Women and Sport Working Group served as a consultative body composed of representatives of the three constituent bodies of the Olympic Movement (the IOC, IFs and NOCs), plus an athlete representative and independent members. Chaired by Anita L. DeFrantz, the Working Group became a full Commission in 2004, and advises the IOC President and the Executive Board on which policies to adopt in order to increase female participation in sport at all levels.

INFORMATION SEMINARS Through its Commission, the IOC has put in place a program of regional and continental seminars for female administrators, coaches, officials, athletes or sports journalists involved in the national or international sports movement.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR WOMEN The IOC has been able to address the need to further develop educational and training program targeting women in sport. With this, the IOC aims to enable women to take leadership positions in the administrative structures of NOCs and National Sports Federations.

OLYMPIC SOLIDARITY PROGRAMMES Olympic Solidarity offers a series of assistance program for athletes, young hopefuls, coaches and sports managers, and these benefit a growing number of women. Furthermore, a special "Women and Sport" program was created to help more particularly the NOCs of developing countries to put in place other types of projects in the field of women and sport, such as research, national seminars or participation in meetings. This program also serves to finance the NOCs' participation in the IOC's regional seminars.

WORLD CONFERENCE Every four years, the IOC organizes a world conference on women and sport, where the primary objective is to analyze the progress made in this field within the Olympic Movement and to define a prioritized plan of action to improve and increase the participation of women in sport. The fifth edition was held in Los Angeles, USA, in February 2012 with over 700 delegates from 121 countries in attendance. The delegates unanimously approved "The Los Angeles Declaration", a series of recommendations aimed at promoting gender equality in sport and using sport as a tool to improve the lives of women around the world. The Declaration focused on two main themes: - The need to bring more women into management and leadership roles - The need to increase collaboration and partnerships, especially with UN organizations, to promote gender equality.

WOMEN AND SPORT TROPHY Every year the IOC "Women and Sport" trophy is awarded to a person or an institution/organization for their remarkable contribution to the development, encouragement and reinforcement of women's participation in sport and physical activity or in the administrative structures of sport. The New Zealand Olympic Committee (NZOC) made history at the 2015 IOC Women in Sport Awards ceremony, when it won the IOC World Trophy. The New Zealand Olympic Committee (NZOC) is leading by example in its efforts to promote women in sport, with strong female representation on its board, within senior management and on its Olympic Games team. The five continental trophies were awarded as follows - IOC Trophy for Africa: Mervat Hassan (Egypt) - IOC Trophy for the Americas: Sara Rosario (Puerto Rico) - IOC Trophy for Asia: Cheikha Hayat Bint Abdulaziz Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) - IOC Trophy for Europe: Stavroula Kozompoli (Greece) - IOC Trophy for Oceania: Cathy Freeman (Australia) In 2014 The World Trophy was awarded to Meriem Cherni Mizouni of Tunisia, a pioneer of women's and girls' sport in her country. The five continental trophies were awarded to: - IOC Trophy for Africa: Aya Mahmoud Medany (Egypt) - IOC Trophy for

the Americas: Nancy Hogshead-Makar (USA) - IOC Trophy for Asia: Cheikha Naïma Al-Sabah (Kuwait) - IOC Trophy for Europe: Anastasia Davydova (Russia) - IOC Trophy for Oceania: Siân Mulholland (Australia) The winners of the 2013 Women and Sport Awards were recognized for their roles in getting more women involved in sport as athletes, administrators, leaders and as members of the media. Qatari Ahlam Salem Mubarak Al Mana, a pioneer for women's and girls' sports rights in her country, was presented with the 2013 World Trophy, while the five continental trophies were awarded as follows: - IOC Trophy for Africa: Dr Djènè Saran Camara (Guinea) - IOC Trophy for the Americas: Marlene Bjornsrud (USA) - IOC Trophy for Asia: Boossaba Yodbangtoey (Thailand) - IOC Trophy for Europe: Ona Baboniene (Lithuania) - IOC Trophy for Oceania: Catherine Alice Wong (Fiji).

Women, gender equality and sport - 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." 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. 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 non-communicable diseases which account for over 60 per cent of global deaths, 66 per cent of which occur in developing countries. 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. Physical activity also helps to reduce the effects of osteoporosis, which women have a higher risk of developing than men. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 . 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.

Inequalities and discrimination- constraining women in sport The positive outcomes of sport for gender equality and women's empowerment are constrained by genderbased 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 empowerment in many different areas, including in the home, the community and the labor 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.

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 program 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 program 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.

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.

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.

Source:

- 1- United Nations (1995). Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 4-15 September 1995.
- 2- 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).
- 3- See the Critical Area of Concern C, Women and health, Strategic Objective C.2, para. 107 (f);
- 4- Critical Area of Concern G, Women in power and decision-making, para. 183; and,
- 5- Critical Area of Concern L, The girl-child, Strategic Objective L.4, para. 280 (d).
- 6- 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