

# Sport for Development Programs for Girls and Women: A Global Assessment

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## Abstract

A number of researchers along with international sport and humanitarian institutions have advocated the need to leverage the positive impact sport can have on individuals, cultures, and societies. Girls and women, in particular, are underrepresented in social, political, legal, and educational positions in countries around the world. The United Nations (UN) suggests that national and international agencies provide girls and women equal access to sport. Access to sport has the potential to promote physical and mental health, social integration, self-esteem, and skill development. Using a framework of sport for development (SFD) theory and programme objectives set forth by the UN, this study identified trends in sport for SFD programmes for girls and women. Through content analysis, the researchers identified patterns in sports and activities, programme objectives, and intended programme impacts. The number of SFD programmes, objectives, and intended impacts identified in this study suggests that the abundance of policies supporting sport and women's development is a step forward in the quest for global gender equity and the achievement of various Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). More research is needed to discern under what conditions these programmes assist in the achievement of MDGs and improve the positioning of girls and women in countries around the globe.

## Background

In 1978, the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the International

Charter of Physical Education and Sport (1) (referred to hereafter as the UNESCO Charter) in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UNESCO Charter promoted sport as a contributor to lifelong education and as a conduit for achieving social needs through the development of sport programmes, coaches, and facilities. National and international governing bodies were encouraged to promote universal participation in physical activity and sport with the belief that sport, as a common language, has the potential to promote peace, respect, and friendship. Finally, the UNESCO Charter was one of the first documents to specifically identify sport as a human right. That is, access to physical activity and sport should be assured and guaranteed for all human beings (1).

Historically, however, women in countries around the world have had limited access and opportunity to participate in sport (2). As such, girls and women may be denied the physical, social, emotional, and relational benefits of sport participation (3). Inability to participate in sport and physical activity is perceived to inhibit development and contribute to a "weaker position of women and girls in social, political, economic, legal, educational, and physical matters" (4)(p5). Recognising the imbalance of women's participation in sport and its potential consequences, the International Working Group on Women and Sport (5) welcomed 280 delegates representing 82 countries to the First World Conference for Women in Sport (1994) and crafted the Brighton Declaration (6). The Declaration aimed to: (a) ensure all girls and women were afforded opportunities to participate in sport while promoting a safe and supportive environment; (b) increase involvement of

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women in sport at all levels and in all functions; (c) validate the knowledge, experiences, and values of women and their contribution to the development of sport; (d) publicly recognise women in sport in an effort to create role models for building a healthy nation; and (e) promote the intrinsic value of sport and its role in personal development (6).

The Brighton Declaration requested governing bodies and institutions responsible for the implementation of sport to comply with equality provisions set forth by the UNESCO Charter, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (7). Similar to the UNESCO Charter (1), the Brighton Declaration (6) explicitly suggested the use of sport as a potential instrument for achieving human rights with specific emphasis on access, equity, and equality for girls and women in sport.

The impact of the Brighton Declaration was immediate. Nearly 200 national and international organizations adopted the Declaration, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (7). Viewed as the preeminent international sports organisation in the world, the IOC quickly established the Working Group on Women and set targets for female membership on National Olympic Committees and the IOC (4, 7). In addition, the IOC updated the Olympic Charter, added more women’s sports programmes to the Olympic games, and created seminars on women’s sport held in locations around the globe (7).

Seizing the momentum created by the Brighton Declaration, the 1998 Windhoek Call for Action (8) (referred to hereafter as The Call) continued to emphasise the development of equal opportunities for girls and women to participate in sport. While this call to action reinforced tenets of The Declaration, it also implored policy makers and practitioners to consider the contribution of sport to “women’s development as a whole and to women’s empowerment” (7 p10) while advocating the need for programmatic and political sustainability. The Call stressed greater cooperation and coordination between national and international governing bodies and agencies. Furthermore, The Call (7 p468) reflected a sensitivity to difference, a growing awareness of the specific needs and desires of women from different countries and, in particular, a greater understanding of the lives and problems of women in the developing world.

Unlike the UNESCO Charter and the Brighton Declaration, The Call forwarded practical recommendations for advancing women in sport and women’s equality around the

globe. Some of these recommendations included: (a) developing action plans and objectives to implement and monitor principles of the Brighton Declaration, (b) collaborating with non-sport entities to further women’s advancement and access to sport, and (c) working with governments to develop appropriate legislation, public policy, and funding by providing evidenced-based impact analysis of sport participation on girls and women (8).

The impetus for the Brighton Declaration was the promotion of equity in sport for women (7). The Windhoek Call for Action (8), however, added a new educational dimension for the use of sport by forwarding it as a contributor to women’s development and empowerment (4). The awareness and action generated by both documents has had far-reaching social, political, and cultural implications for the role of sport participation in the development of girls and women around the world.

For example, in 2000, the United Nations established the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) designed to eradicate poverty, hunger, and disease as well as to promote gender equality, health, education, and environmental sustainability on a global scale (9). Several MDGs – universal education, gender equity, maternal health, child health, and combating HIV/AIDS – relate directly to girls and women (9). To achieve the MDGs, the United Nations, UNESCO, and national governing bodies advocated the use of one particular human right – sport – to achieve another – gender equity. The United Nations encouraged governments and sport-related organizations to create and implement educational partnership initiatives to help achieve MDGs (10).

**Sport as a Tool for Development**

Culturally and socially, sport has dualistic qualities. Sport can divide people and countries by promoting racism, nationalism, discrimination, corruption, drug abuse, and violence (11-16). Numerous scholars and practitioners, however, believe that sport can serve as a conduit for advancing social change (4, 12, 16-22) through values of democracy, justice, and human rights (23, 24). Sport has the potential to resolve social problems including deficiencies in education, the spread of disease, poverty, inter-ethnic conflict, and gender inequities (10, 12, 14, 21, 22, 23, 24). Furthermore, policy-makers and practitioners continue to advocate for the social, physical, and psychological benefits gained through participation in sport, which are especially important for the development of girls and women (2-4, 26-34).

In girls, research has shown sport promotes physical fitness, helps control weight, and reduces stress and anxiety (26, 30), while providing opportunities for peer-to-peer social interaction beyond family networks (3, 4, 14, 26). Multiple studies have shown that playing a sport improves confidence, enhances self-esteem, improves body image (2, 27-33) and lowers depression rates (35). Through sport, girls have the chance to develop leadership and negotiation skills, and to serve their peers as leaders (4, 14, 26). Sport and recreational activities can also promote education, which can enhance female empowerment (4, 13).

The objectives set forth in the Brighton Declaration, Windhoek Call for Action, and UN Millennium Development Goals resulted in a proliferation of educational sport for development (SFD) programmes for women around the world. It is unclear, however, if and how SFD programmes for women are contributing to gender equity and women's development and empowerment. Given the resources (e.g., economic, human, social, political) applied to these programmes, it is important to understand the objectives and impacts of women's SFD programmes.

Though national and international organizations advocate the use of sport for development, little research (see 22, 56) has been conducted to explore the content and outcomes of any SFD programme, let alone those for girls and women. Several theoretical frameworks (e.g., feminist theory, new social movement theory, resource mobilization) can be employed to analyze sport policy and practical intentions as it pertains to equity and women's development. Few frameworks, however, actually assess sport praxis – the relationship between theory and practice – and provide evidence-based outcomes aimed at achieving social change and development (22, 36-40).

### **Sport for Development Theory**

Lyras (15, 21) advanced a Sport for Development (SFD) theory grounded in empirical evidence from the field that advocates an interdisciplinary approach (12, 21, 22, 37, 41). SFD theory explores the attributes and procedures that can increase efficiency in the initiation, management, assessment, and effectiveness of educational sport programmes. More specifically, SFD theory was designed to address the gap between theory and practice by using scientific procedures to assess three components – content, process, and outcomes – of sport for development programmes.

Content refers to the types of sports (individual and team) and educational themes (e.g., health, relationship building,

conflict resolution, environmental awareness) used in sport for development initiatives. According to the United Nations (14), activities should be fun, engaging, and interactive. Because sport has been identified as a way to build understanding and to promote tolerance and social integration, playing games native to an area or culture can be especially effective (13, 19). Programmes should also reflect cultural needs if they are to engage and sustain participation (14).

Assuming programmes reflect the social and cultural needs of a community, identifying programme content can (a) provide researchers with specific information about the needs and concerns of a group of women and (b) help practitioners tailor educational information to meet the needs of participants. Additionally, collecting basic demographic data about the participants and programme activities (e.g., sports, programmatic themes, discussion topics) can help researchers and policymakers determine which programmes offer services that promote the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Process examines organizational structures including policies, staffing structure, programme agenda and practices such as the delivery of programme activities (14, 21, 22). Meier (4) suggested the implementation of a sustainable sport project, which promotes gender equity, requires the consideration of specific socio-cultural and socioeconomic parameters including the access to and control over resources, dynamics of power, and different gender roles. Training instructors and coaches is vital to ensuring a safe and healthy educational environment; women should also play key roles (e.g., coordinators, instructors, coaches, mentors) in the implementation of the programme (14). Furthermore, programmes should connect with a range of stakeholders (e.g., community organizations, financial sponsors, health practitioners) to provide the most up-to-date educational information. Connecting with outside stakeholders may provide ideas for additional resources and programming (14).

According to the SFD theory, the content and process should promote organizational change, utilise problem-based learning, and aim for the transfer of knowledge to community-based action (21). For example, 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking was established in 1999 to “improve the lives of disadvantaged women in Nepal”(42). The non-profit organisation provides training and instruction for women by women. Women trained in the programme can be hired as porters and trail guides for visitors wishing to explore the Himalayas. For many of the women in this

programme, it is the first time they have received compensation for work; they have access to education and health benefits, which increase their quality of life. Participants can use the skills from the programme and attribute them to other situations outside the mountains. However, little is known about individual participants before they matriculate into the programme or after they leave. Success stories are passed along through word of mouth; there is no scientific monitoring and evaluation process to determine the impact of the programme on local women or the community.

Finally, SFD theory suggests programmes should employ long and short-term monitoring and evaluation plans to measure the impact, or outcomes, of the educational sport experience across time and space (21). Evidence-based outcomes are critical to creating and adjusting policy and programme curricula, as well as the decision-making process. Moreover, defining and measuring outcomes are vital to determining if a programme is achieving intended objectives and impact. The sport for development theory framework establishes sport as a social practice that has the potential to be reproduced and adjusted over time (43). Without accurate measures, it is difficult to determine (a) if a programme is having the intended impact and (b) if and how programmes should change. Therefore, viability, validity, and sustainability of sport for development programmes are questionable for individual programmes as well as the collective impact across programmes.

SFD theory can serve as a framework based on the programmes and initiatives for girls and women that can be compared and contrasted. First, the theoretical framework provides clear objectives for assessment. Second, the objectives can be explored within the context and conditions of SFD programmes. Finally, identifying SFD programmes for girls and women that are in accord with these objectives can yield practical information for establishing and disseminating best practices to current and future programmes.

In summary, the abundance of policy supporting sport and women’s development is a step forward in the quest for global gender equity and the achievement of various Millennium Development Goals. Despite the plethora of humanitarian efforts, the effectiveness and application of policies and sport for development programmes are still questioned, and gender issues still exist around the globe. Identifying SFD programmes for girls and women and determining how those programmes are delivered can (a) provide a picture of common concerns and issues for

women around the globe; (b) help researchers, practitioners, and policymakers determine if policy is informing practice; (c) identify current and potential barriers for programme implementation; and (d) offer insight into how evidence-based practice might influence public policy. Sport for Development Theory is an important tool for examining SFD programmes across the globe and can potentially serve as a framework to assess the process, content, and components that lead to development as defined by the UN MDGs. SFD theory is being utilised as a theoretical and programme development blueprint of the Sport for Development Global Initiative (SFDGI), a project that aims to (a) map and assess existing SFD programmes, tools and resources across the globe, (b) create an interdisciplinary framework and community, and (c) initiate and establish the International Sport for Development and Peace Association (16, 17, 21, 44-45) . One of the objectives of the SFDGI is to assess existing sport programmes and initiatives that aim to promote inclusion and gender equality. Therefore, the questions guiding this research are:

1. What SFD programmes exist for girls and women?
2. What sports and activities are utilized?
3. What are the major programme objectives and intended impacts?
4. What global patterns exist?

**Method**

Data were collected from four Internet databases (Beyond Sport, The International Platform for Sport and Development, Ashoka – Sport for a Better World, Ashoka – GameChangers) between August 2009 and June 2010 (44-45). The Internet databases were a collection of SFD programmes submitted for award recognition (i.e., Beyond Sport and Ashoka) and/or for information-sharing purposes. Databases yielded 1,033 sport for development programmes (44, 45, 46). Purposive criterion sampling resulted in a sample of 440 programmes, or 42.5% of all programmes, specifically targeting girls and women. Of those programmes, only programmes with complete profiles (N=376) were included for analysis. Researchers employed content analysis to observe the trends and different practices of SFD programmes around the world. Content analysis refers “to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (47 p453).

Variables identified for analysis included programme country, target group, sports and activities, programme objectives, and intended impact of programmes. Data were analyzed deductively and inductively. Programme objectives and intended impacts were deductively coded in accordance with the Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) International Working Group (known hereafter as The Group). The Group (36) suggested that sport activities would have the most benefit in the following areas:

- Individual development (e.g., self-efficacy, skill development)
- Health promotion and disease prevention
- Promotion of gender equality
- Social integration and the development of social capital
- Peace building and conflict prevention/resolution
- Post-disaster/trauma relief and normalization of life
- Economic development
- Communication and social mobilization
- New programmatic categories were added through inductive analysis, which allowed new patterns and themes to emerge (47).

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Additionally, Green (19) suggested SDP programmes can be categorised by the manner in which sport is used as a vehicle to deliver these programme curricula: social inclusion, diversion, and sport as a hook. Social inclusion programmes are designed for a specific population to increase the number of participants from a specific population, as well as the diversity of participants in a given sport (19). Diversion programmes “require an activity that is attractive enough to divert participants from anti-social behaviors”(19 p135) such as gang involvement, drug and alcohol abuse, and risky sexual behaviour. Programmes employing a “hook” do so by using sport to attract participants followed by the provision of services such as career counseling, access to healthcare, and tutoring (19).

To ensure interrater reliability, two researchers coded each programme independently based on the aforementioned criteria. The programmes were sorted into corresponding categories by the raters. Raters agreed on 94% of the programmes, indicating a high level of interrater reliability. When raters disagreed on programme variables, differences were resolved through discussion, which resulted in 100%

agreement.

**Results**

Of the 376 programmes analysed, 123 were found in Europe, 101 in Africa, 68 in North America, 55 in Asia, and 29 in Australia. Overall, the top three primary programme objectives included were individual development (n=109), social integration and the development of social capital (n=54), and the promotion of gender equity (n=49). Of the eight SFD programme objectives identified by the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (36), all were represented (Table 1). In addition, a new category – equipment and facilities – emerged. Programmes in the “equipment and facilities” category included the development of (a) sportswear designed to meet the requirements of various religious and cultural groups; (b) mobile playing facilities such as basketball courts; (c) mobile equipment such as goals for soccer, field hockey, and goal ball; (d) equipment adapted for athletes with disabilities. An “other” category was also added to include objectives that were unclear or did not specifically relate to sport for development programmes.

**Table 1.** Breakdown of programme objectives

Type of Activity	# of Programs
Individual development	109
Social integration and the development of social capital	54
Promotion of gender equity	49
Health promotion and disease prevention	44
Communication and social mobilization	39
Other*	30
Equipment and Facilities*	21
Economic development	19
Peace-building and conflict resolution	10
Post-disaster trauma relief	5

*\*programme objectives not previously identified by the UNOSDP*

Common programme content included health education (e.g., maternal health, HIV/AIDS, alcohol/drug abuse, nutrition), social inclusion (e.g., equality, breaking down stereotypes, accessibility, citizenship), and personal development (e.g., increased self-esteem, life-skills, leadership). Nearly two-thirds of the programmes (n=216) used social inclusion to attract participants. Other programmes used sport as a hook (n=99) or a diversion (n=61). A summary of most popular sports, programme objectives, and use of sport by continent is listed in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Most popular sports, programme objectives, and use of sport by continent

<i>Continent</i>	<i># of Programs</i>	<i>Most Popular Sports</i>	<i>Programme Objectives</i>	<i>Use of Sport (# of programs)</i>
Europe	123	Soccer (67)	(1) Individual Development	(1) Inclusion (216)
Africa	101	Dance (32)	(2) Health Promotion	(2) Hook (99)
North America	68	Soccer (65)	(1) Individual Development	(3) Diversion (61)
Asia	55	Running (30)	(2) Social Integration	
Australia	29	Basketball (31)	(1) Individual Development	
		Soccer (18)	(2) Social Integration	
		Soccer (31)	(1) Individual Development	
		Cricket (18)	(2) Gender Equity	
		Basketball (16)	(1) Individual Development	
		Running (9)	(2) Health promotion	

Overall, soccer (n=139), general fitness (n=83), dance (n=29), and basketball (n=28) were the most popular sport activities. In total, 53 different sports were used in SFD programmes. Many SFD programmes for girls and women also combined traditional sport (e.g., soccer, basketball) and nontraditional sport (e.g. cultural dance, double-dutch), as well as cultural activities including storytelling, music, and art. Eighty-one percent of all programmes in this study were created after 2001 and nearly 62% (n=271) of the programmes were founded between 2006 and 2009. Additionally, while we did not set out to assess monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes, it was noted that very few SFD programmes for girls and women mentioned using scientific M&E processes to determine the actual impact of programmes over time. This finding underscores the absence of substantial scientific evidence in SFD programming for girls and women (4). Furthermore, it strengthens the argument for evaluation. Policy makers and practitioners can utilise this evaluation data to maximise the intended positive impacts of Sport for Development programmes.

**Discussion**

The use of sport for the development and empowerment of girls and women is undeniably supported by international (UN, UNESCO, IOC) and national governing bodies as evidenced by the proliferation of SFD programmes around the world. Identifying programme content as it pertains to how a programme is delivered was a primary focus of this study. Content refers to the types of sports (individual and team) and educational themes (e.g., health, relationship building, conflict resolution, environmental awareness) used in SFD initiatives. This study utilised Sport for Development Theory as an important tool for examining

SFD programmes across the globe.

As results illustrate, SFD programme content was delivered primarily through sport as a tool for social inclusion. Social inclusion programmes offer a safe sporting environment, which allow girls and women the freedom to socialise and express themselves through movement and physical activity (4, 48-50). This is particularly important in communities with strict cultural or religious practices. As such, SFD social inclusion programmes were prevalent in Asian, African, and eastern European countries. Creating an environment that addresses the needs of community members shows an awareness of the “interconnectedness of issues relating to race, ethnicity, gender, and physicality” which is “essential if opportunities for all to participate are to improve” (51 p137).

Sport was also used as a “hook” to attract participants. This approach may be particularly relevant to communities in need of educational programming (e.g., HIV/AIDS, reproductive practices, mental health, self-efficacy, skill development). Programmes utilising the hook were prevalent across continents represented in this study, but may be effective in communities in which women may have a baseline knowledge of and access to sport. As cautioned by Hargreaves (7), “sport has no relevance to the lives of the majority of women for whom poverty, malnutrition, and disease are a way of life” (7 p465). Thus, an SFD programme attempting to “hook” participants through sport may be ineffective in such communities. The most popular sports in SFD programmes included soccer, general fitness, dance and basketball. As the world’s most popular game, soccer is also one of the most accessible in terms of space, equipment, and cost. Activities like general fitness may include running, calisthenics, or cultural games. Like soccer,

general fitness and dance activities are often low cost and require limited equipment and space. Programmes incorporating dance may also help carry on important cultural heritage for some communities. Activities such as dance may be important for communities who welcome the assistance of Western countries, but also seek to retain their cultural heritage.

The intended outcomes of SFD programmes analysed in this study focused on individual development, social integration and social capital, and gender equity. Programmes promoting individual development employed curricula designed to help participants become healthier (e.g., physically, mentally) while also learning a new practical skill. Studies (2,4) have advocated for programmes to include individual development as it promotes integration and the development of social capital. However, socio-cultural barriers have the potential to inhibit the participation of girls and women in sport programmes, which can negatively impact efforts toward gender equality and inclusion.

Though gender equity was identified as one of the top three programme objectives in this study, the majority of programmes (77%) are girls and women only. According to Hall, the “discourse about women and sport, on a practical level, is now about integration versus separation” (43 p330). While there are benefits to separate environments, there are also drawbacks. Separate environments may recreate -- if not escalate -- social divisions between men and women and between groups of men and groups of women (48). Using Allport’s (54) framework of intergroup contact, Lyras and Hums (55) suggested an inclusive setting as an end goal for sport for peace and development programmes. Studies have shown cross-group interaction promotes communication, tolerance, and understanding (2, 12, 13, 19, 22, 39, 45, 49, 52, 53). However, in some countries and for certain populations of women, cross-group interaction is not permissible (52). Therefore, it is vitally important to SFD practitioners to understand the culture and needs of girls and women in a community before developing or implementing an SFD programme.

The Beijing Platform for Action and the United Nations have advocated for special programmes targeting girls and women citing gender equality and the empowerment of women as critical factors in the eradication of poverty, hunger, disease and sustainable development (34). Although the above organizations indirectly advocated that encouraging women and girls to participate in SFD programmes in a separate environment is more effective

than in a combined environment, it is impossible to draw such a conclusion from the findings of the current study. Therefore, future research is needed to explore which programme environment (mixed group vs. single-sex environments) is better to guarantee gender equality. It is not clear how SFD programmes facilitate the growth of social capital, gender equity, or other intended outcomes. As such, there is still little known about the actual impacts (physical, psychological, social, cultural) of SFD programmes around the world.

Moreover, a paramount concern brought forth by the dearth of evidence on the actual impact of SFD programmes is that of collective impact. Rather than assess programmes based on their primary impact (e.g. individual development, social integration, etc.), perhaps programmes should be evaluated more holistically and in relation to the cyclical linkages between individual programme components and their collective impact. In other words, how might individual development lead to social integration? How might social integration lead to gender equity? And how might gender equity promote individual development? Thus, more research is necessary to measure intended impacts versus actual outcomes.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This study has several limitations. First, this study identified 440 programmes for girls and women around the world. Of those programmes, 271 were established between 2001 and the present day. Some of the programmes are located in sub-Saharan Africa, while others take place on urban playgrounds in Sydney, Australia and New York City, USA. The key similarity among all of the programmes is that they all have access to technology, primarily the Internet. Therefore, it is unclear how many programmes exist in locations around the world that do not have access to the Internet. Recent research reminds us that the Internet is perceived to be “an integral part of the competitive neoliberal environment that protects and promotes the interests of business savvy NGOs that are often better positioned to leverage relationships through online network” (56 p316). Such a statement also implies that groups who are not well versed in technology or groups without technological access are at a “notable disadvantage, especially in terms of mobilizing funding and building partnerships” (56 p316).

Second, content analysis provides only a broad overview of trends from programmes listed on four Internet databases. The methodology does not provide in-depth information

about individual programmes. By utilising SFD theory, academics and practitioners can develop a better understanding of programme content, process, and outcomes.

In other words, there is more to learn about programme delivery. What topics are covered, how, and by whom? Have women living in the communities in which these programmes are delivered been included on the decision making process about programme content and delivery?(4) It is important to have a better understanding of the manner in which SFD programmes are meeting the needs of girls and women around the globe.

Finally, this study did not identify if and how the programmes were monitored and evaluated. In other words, just because SFD programmes for girls and women exist, does not mean they are contributing to the growth and development of women and girls or to the Millennium Development Goals. Several researchers (2, 4, 14, 22, 36, 39, 53-57) suggest the importance of monitoring and evaluation plans. Such plans can be used to improve curricula, programme delivery, and sustainability. Currently, the International Working Group on Women and Sport offers tool kits and resources for the development of women and sport across the globe (5).

**Conclusion**

In summary, the abundance of policy supporting sport and women’s development is a step forward in the quest for global gender equity and the achievement of various Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations, the Brighton Declaration, the Windhoek Call for Action, and a myriad of other national and international organizations call for the development of programmes designed to empower women and promote health, education and gender equity. However, barriers exist between the creation and implementation of policy. First, and most significantly, much of the research on the benefits of sport has been conducted in developed Western countries. Still, governments, corporations, private donors, and nongovernmental organizations contribute valuable resources to SFD programmes (36, 39). For example, this study identified 440 SFD programmes for girls and women in countries around the world. Programmes aimed to promote individual development, health, gender equity, and social integration. Sport was used as a tool for inclusion and as a hook to attract participants to specific programmes. Little, however, is known if these programmes are achieving the goals set forth by member countries of the United

Nations. Therefore, monitoring and evaluation processes are critical to understanding the collective impact and sustainability of SFD programmes, particularly those targeting girls and women. It is vital to include girls and women in the design of programmes to ensure they are meeting the needs of individual communities (36). Moreover, SFD programmes must strive to ensure that girls and women are in stronger social, political, economic, and educational positions in all countries around the world.

*Note: The first author of this manuscript was authorized to use the database, the research design and methodology of the Sport for Development Global Initiative (Lyras & Wolf, 2009) to assess the existing landscape of Sport for Development Programs for Girls and Women across the globe.*

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