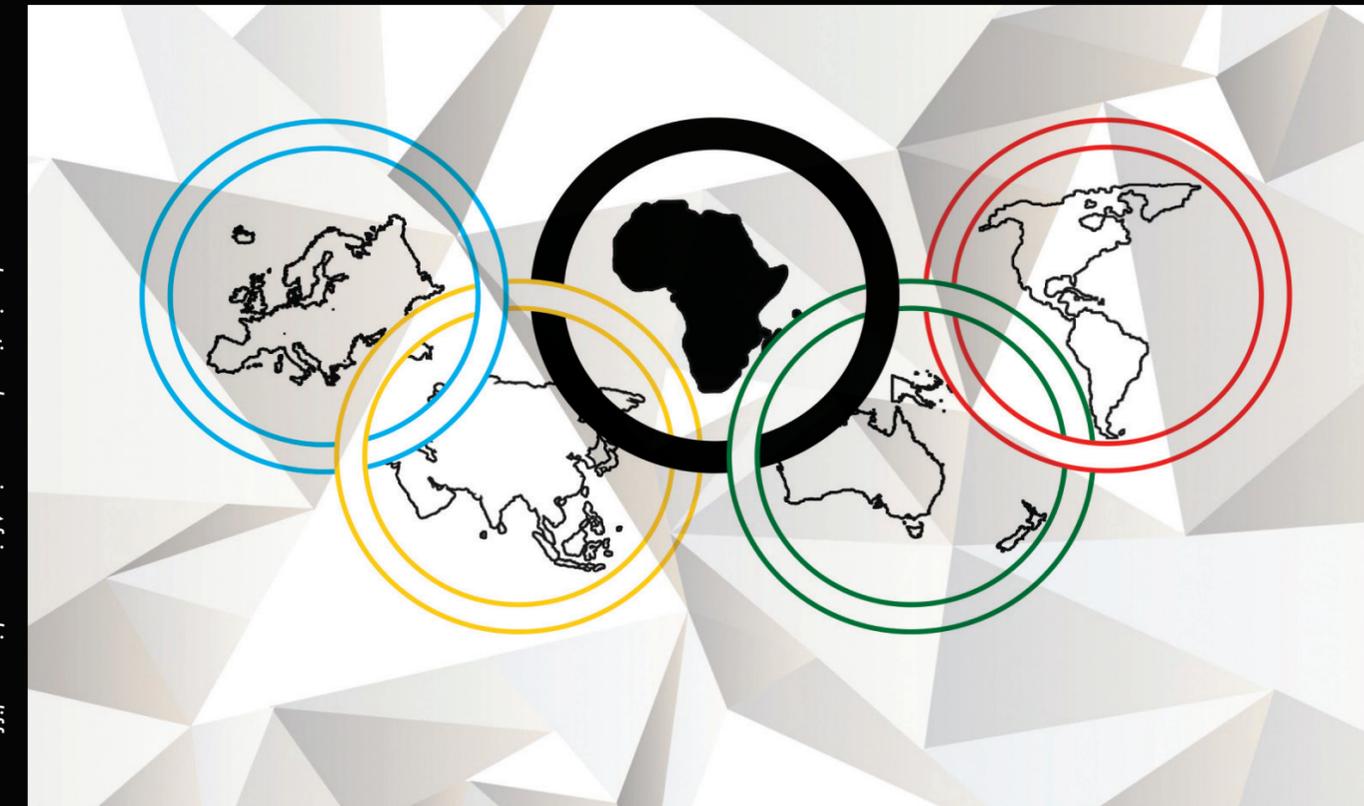




Anneliese Goslin

*Inspirational women in Africa: making a difference in physical education, sport and dance*

Anneliese Goslin  
(Editor)



*Inspirational women in Africa:  
making a difference in physical education,  
sport and dance*

editora  
NGME

Anneliese Goslin  
(Editor)

**INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN IN AFRICA:  
MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN PHYSICAL  
EDUCATION, SPORT AND DANCE**

Juiz de Fora  
NGIME/UFJF  
2016

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**Capa:** Gabriel Schuery  
**Projeto gráfico, diagramação e editoração:** Camilla Pinheiro  
**Revisão:** Maria Beatriz Rocha Ferreira e Eliana Lucia Ferreira  
Os textos são de responsabilidade total de seus autores.

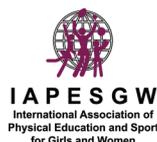
Dados internacionais de Catalogação-na-Publicação (CIP)

I59 Inspirational women in Africa : making a difference in physical education, sport and dancer / Anneliese Goslin (editor). – Juiz de Fora : NGIME/UFJF, 2016. 256 p. : il. color. ; 21 cm. – (IAPESGW Continent Serie).

Inclui bibliografias.  
ISBN 978-85-67380-53-7

1. Mulheres na educação - África. 2. Mulheres na arte - África. 3. Mulheres nos esportes - África. I. Goslin, Anneliese. II. Série.

CDD 305.42096



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Distribuição gratuita

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# FOREWORD

It is a great privilege for the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW) to have this opportunity to greet current, former and potential members and other readers through this book series. The purpose of the 'five continents series' is to commemorate some of the many inspirational women who have worked in physical education, sport and dance to increase opportunities for girls and women around the world. We thank Eliana Ferreira whose project led to the University of Juiz de Fora (Brazil) partnering IAPESGW on this unique venture.

**Inspirational women: Making a difference in physical education, sport and dance** is a five book series and IAPESGW is proud to say that members of the voluntary Executive Board stepped up to collect, edit and present each of these books for the series. We also thank the members of the Association who were the major contributors and facilitators of contacts that made this ambitious idea a success.

Oceania – Janice Crosswhite OAM (Australia).

Europe – Rosa Diketmüller (Austria).

Americas – Beatriz Ferreira (Brazil).

Africa – Anneliese Goslin (South Africa).

Asia – Canan Koca (Turkey).

The series will increase the visibility of women in the field across the world by profiling women's lives and achievements. It is

by no means an exhaustive collection of outstanding women. There will be many others who have been influential as roles models and leaders. But it offers a contribution in a world where men and male sports still dominate newspapers and television broadcasts alongside the history books of modern sport.

The editor of each book in this series had the autonomy to manage the collation of the volume as she preferred. She was also tasked with contextualising the continent in the introduction, offering a rationale and synopsis of the distinctive content and concluding each volume. The books are published by the research group "Núcleo do Grupo de Pesquisa em Inclusão, Movimento e Ensino a Distância [NGIME]" (Research Group on Inclusion, Movement and Distance Learning) coordinated by Eliana Ferreira – University of Juiz da Fora, it is a major publication project sponsor by the Brazilian government. It is expected that the books will be distributed to the Brazilian Universities and to attendees at ICSEMIS, Brazil 2016.

## **The International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women**

The International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW) was formed in 1949 and is the longest serving voluntary organization supporting the advancement of girls and women in Physical Education, Sport, Dance and Physical Activity.

Our Aims are:

- 1 To bring together interested scholars and practitioners of many countries working to improve the position of girls and women in the fields of physical education, sport and physical activity.

- 2 To represent the interests of girls and women at all levels and in all areas of physical education, sport and physical activity.
- 3 To strengthen international contacts and networks.
- 4 To afford opportunities for the discussion of mutual challenges and to share good practice.
- 5 To promote exchanges of persons and ideas among countries.
- 6 To promote research on physical education, sport and physical activity for girls and women.
- 7 To co-operate with other associations and agencies working to promote the interests of girls and women in physical education, sport and physical activity.
- 8 To promote leadership development throughout the world.

Our Vision:

Throughout the world, girls and women will benefit from:

- Participation in physical education, sport, physical activity and dance.
- Improved health through physical activity for all.
- Scientifically-based information.
- Quality education.

Ultimately, throughout the world, girls and women will be empowered through physical activity to: enjoy a balanced and healthy lifestyle, achieve a sense of value and well-being and make a positive contribute to society.

Members of the Association share belief in the value of physical activity in the lives of all girls and women, thereby forming a network of voices of, and for, the support of girls and women, improving their position at local, national and global levels. All members supporting IAPESGW at national and international level are volunteers who are driven to make time and space for stronger international support and camaraderie that networks like IAPESGW can bring. Over many years IAPESGW has been the place where young or early career researchers have found a supportive and accessible context alongside experienced colleagues in which to embark on presentation and research projects. The Executive Board is strong by global reach and also range of academic and practical experience and skills. Members of the Board are elected every four years and new volunteers who really want to make a difference by serving such an Association are always welcome. The current Executive Board indicates the extent of our international collaboration and is as follows:

President: **Rosa Lopez de D'Amico** (Professor, Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador, Pedagógico de Maracay, **Venezuela**).

Vice-Presidents: **Janice Crosswhite** (OAM and President of the Australian Women sport and Recreation Association (AWRA), **Australia**).

**Anneliese Goslin** (Professor, University of Pretoria, **South Africa**).

**Karin Lofstrom** (Executive Director – Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women – CAAWS, **Canada**).

**Rosa Diketmüller** (Assistant Professor, University of Vienna, **Austria**).

**Tansin Benn** (Visiting Professor, University of Plymouth, **UK**).

**Darlene Kluka** (Professor, University of Barry, **USA**).

**Gladys Bequer** (National Director of Physical Education and Health Promotion at the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER) and Professor at the Higher Institute of Physical Culture (ISCF), **Cuba**).

**Marianne Meier** (Terre des Hommes International Federation, **Switzerland**).

**Maryam Koushkie Jahromi** (Associate Professor, Shiraz University, **Iran**).

**Canan Koca** (Associate Professor, Hacettepe University, **Turkey**).

**Keh Nyit Chin** (Professor, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, **Taiwan**).

**Beatriz Ferreira** (Professor, State University of Campinas – UNICAMP and is currently included in the program CAPES Visiting Professor Senior at the Federal University of Grande Dourados – Mato Grosso do Sul, **Brazil**).

**Arisa Yagi** (Professor Japan Women's College of Physical Education, Tokyo, **Japan**).

The full history of **Presidents** who have served IAPESGW is as follows:

1949 - 1961 Dorothy Ainswoth (USA).

1961 - 1965 Marie Thérèse Eyquem (France).

1965 - 1981 Liselott Diem (Germany).

1981 - 1989 Helene Tollich (Austria).

1989 - 1997 Patricia Bowen-West (UK).

1997 - 2005 Margaret Talbot (UK).

2005 - 2009 Darlene Kluka (USA).  
2009 - 2013 Tansin Benn (UK).  
2013 ... Rosa Lopez de D'Amico (Venezuela).

IAPESGW has held quadrennial Scientific Congresses since 1949 around the World:

1949	Copenhagen, Denmark	1985	Warwick, UK
1953	Paris, France	1989	Bali, Indonesia
1957	London, UK	1993	Melbourne, Australia
1961	Washington, USA	1997	Lahti, Finland
1965	Koln, Germany	2001	Alexandria, Egypt
1969	Tokyo, Japan	2005	Edmonton, Canada
1973	Tehran, Iran	2009	Stellenbosch, S. Africa
1977	Cape Town, S. Africa	2013	Havana, Cuba
1981	Buenos Aires, Argentina	2017	Miami, USA

In 1999 a special Conference event was held to commemorate the Association's 50th anniversary in the place of its birth - Smith College USA.

Alongside these Scientific Congresses, the Association contributes to other international scientific programs such as the quadrennial *International Convention on Science, Education and Medicine in Sport* (ICSEMIS). As a members' Association, IAPESGW responds to requests for information, support, research and action.

As a recognised Member Association of the International Council for Sport Sciences and Physical Education (ICSSPE), IAPESGW helps to construct international policy and aid work in sport and physical education. It is one of six bodies that contribute to the *International Committee of Sport Pedagogy (ICSP)*, a working group established by ICSSPE.

In addition to IAPESGW, the working group includes the following international partner associations: FIEP – Federation Internationale D` Education Physique / International Federation for Physical Education; AIESEP – Association Internationale des Ecoles Superieures d'Education Physique / International Association for Physical Education in Higher Education; IFAPA International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity; ISCPES – International Society for Comparative Physical Education and Sport; ICCE – International Council of Coaching Excellence. Representatives of this working group have contributed to collaborative research such as the "Global Voices project", and, through ICSSPE to the "Quality Physical Education (QPE) Guidelines for Policy-Makers" and the "Revised International Charter of Physical Education and Sport" that emerged from MINEPS 2013, Berlin, and were published by UNESCO (2015). The Association also has representation on related bodies such as the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) where we work alongside Women Sport International (WSI).

IAPESGW's memberships continuing to grow with representation throughout the world via members on all five continents. The Association supports its members in the fields of sport, physical education, dance and physical activity for women and girls and provides opportunities for professional development and international cooperation. If you are interested in learning more or in joining please see our website at [www.iapesgw.org](http://www.iapesgw.org).

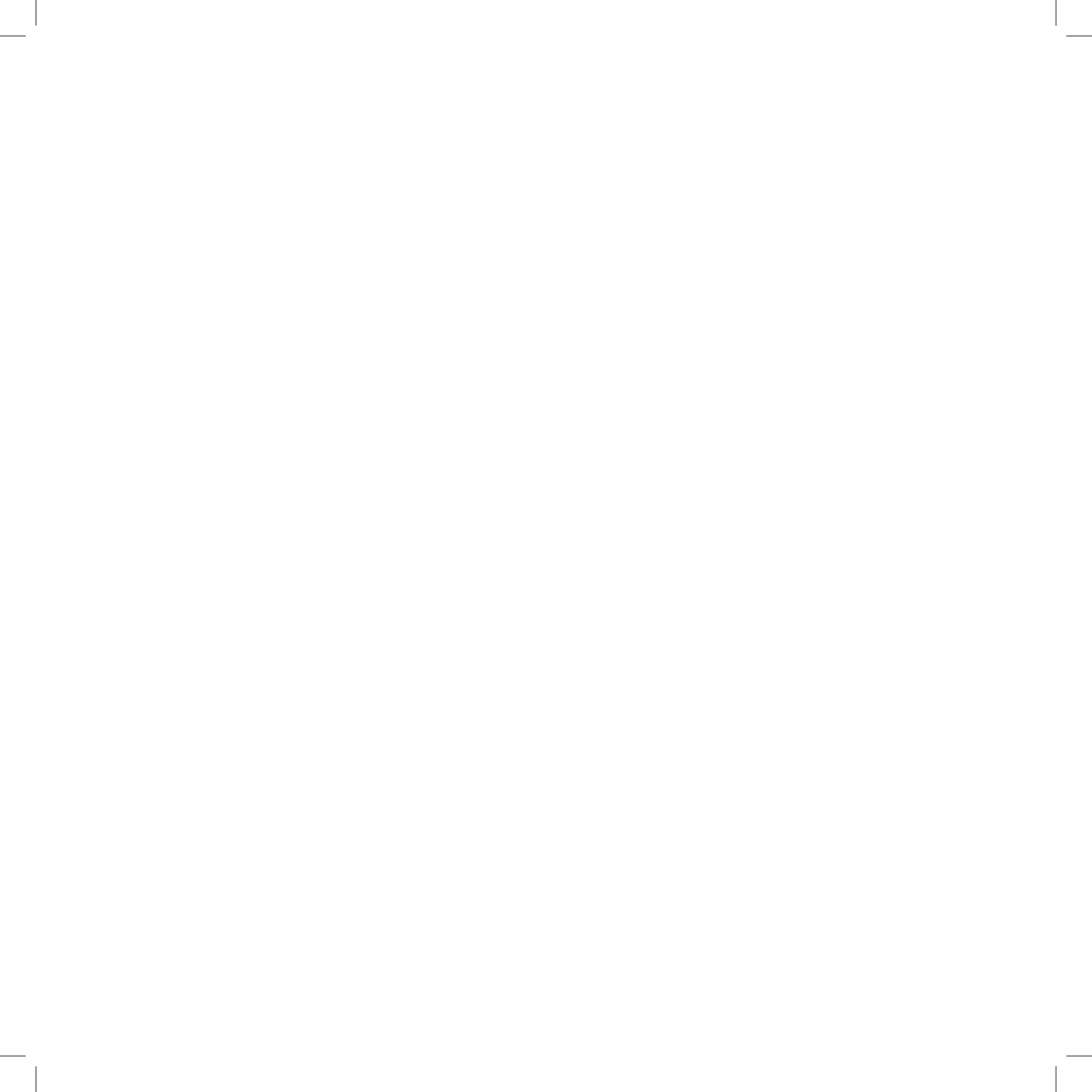
Be part of the future of the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women.

Co-authors:

Rosa Lopez de D'Amico (Venezuela) (Current President)

Tansin Benn (UK) President 2009 – 2013

Darlene Kluka (USA) President 2005 – 2009



# FOREWORD

This collection represents a milestone in the history of physical education as it seeks to present the conditions of equality and opportunities for physical activity around the world. This publication brings together experiences from five continents, highlighting elements which allowed to identify the progress and challenges of world policies in physical education.

In recent years, the Center for Inclusion, Movement and Distance Learning at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora – Brazil sought partnerships aiming to build a work disclosure policy that can support studies that consider the experiences of pedagogical practices in the physical activities. This is, undoubtedly a publication that makes us very proud, as it structure a proposal for a diverse and inclusive physical education.

A series of debates, the consolidation of an accessibility policy and the construction of pedagogical practices involving the conditions for a complete access, are the basis of this book.

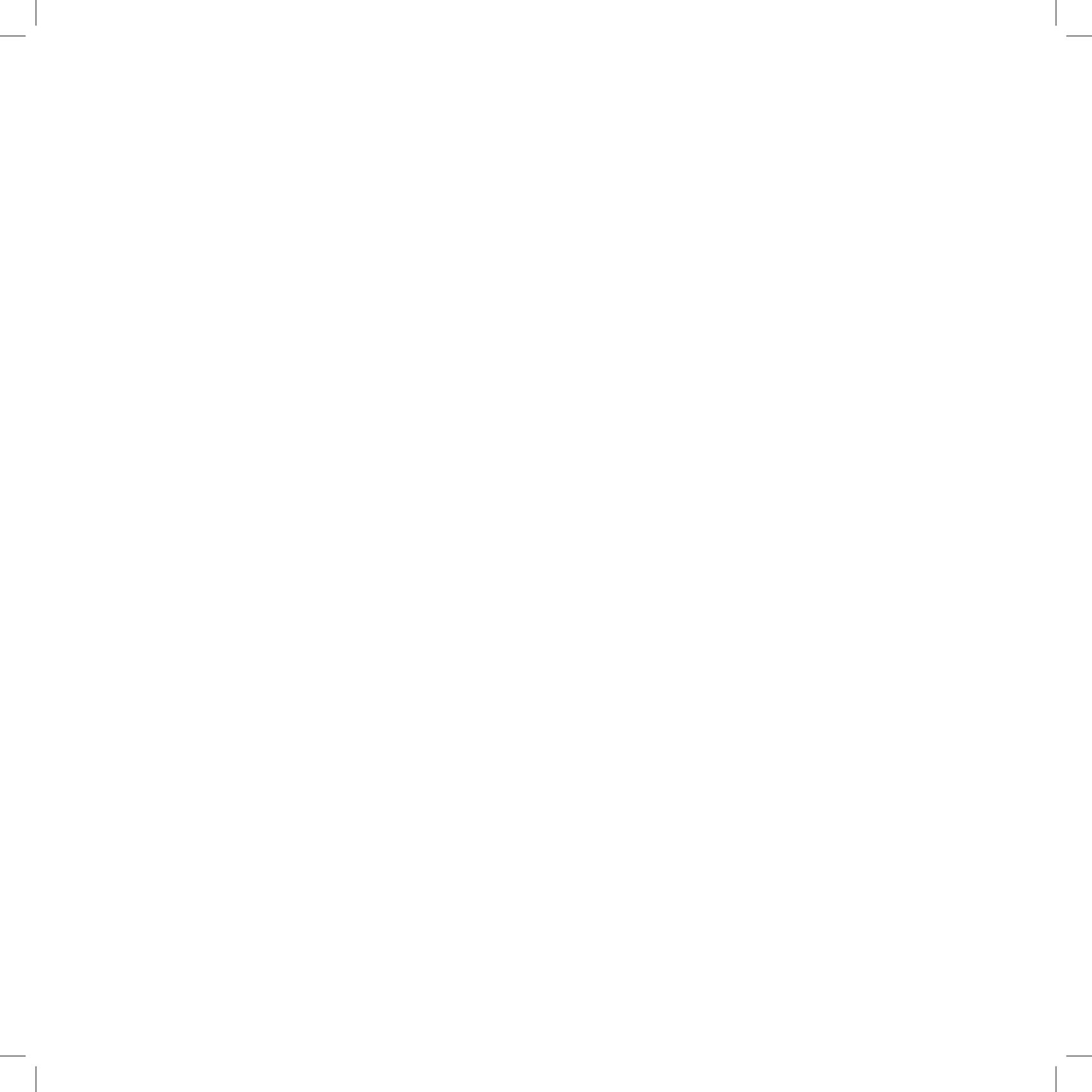
In this sense, physical education acquires more relevance, establishing a more social understanding, related to accessibility and at the same time, is sensitive to the specific demands defined for education based on diversity.

Based on extensive material reported here, we share the idea that, every day, it becomes more evident that physical activities play an important role in ensuring the exercise of citizenship.

Profa. Dra. Eliana Lucia Ferreira  
Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora – UFJF  
Ministério de Educação – MEC/BRASIL

**1**

**PROLOGUE AND  
OVERVIEW OF  
AFRICA**



# INTRODUCTION

The continent of Africa reflects diverse cultures, religions, geography, political and economic systems. There is often a common misconception that Africa is a country. Africa is not a single place and Africans are not a single group of people (AMUSA; TORIOLA, 2010). Africa is the second largest continent covering 30 244 049 square kilometres with a population of over 1 billion people spread over 54 countries with more than 2000 spoken languages. Africa is a vast continent – the USA, China, India, Europe and Japan combined all fit into Africa. Geographically, Africa is classified by the United Nations as a developing region, together with Central America, Asia (excluding Japan) and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand). Continental Africa is divided into the five regions of Eastern Africa, Central Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa and Western Africa. Although Africa is a sizeable continent, it is often perceived as the “dark continent”, resulting in misconceptions about the people and their contributions to the world.

Africa has a history that is not always appreciated. The ancient Egypt monuments, the rock-hewn churches of Ethiopia, the Fes Medina and the Great Zimbabwe ruins are proof of Africa's unique history and contribution to civilization. While the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were in their founding stages, Timbuktu in Mali already had three thriving universities.

It is not always hot and dry in Africa. It also snows in Africa. Northern and southern regions of Africa experience harsh winters while eastern and central regions experience equatorial climates. Africa is certainly not technologically backward. The Latin quote *Ex Africa semper aliquid novi* (Always something new out of Africa) applies to the long lists of African inventions and inventors. The plentiful technological innovations of African inventors include pathogen detection systems, high tech prostheses, automobile anti-theft devices, egg incubators and solar lamps and traffic lights. Their contributions provide valuable input and impetus to the industrialization process of Africa.

Fifty percent (519,058,499) of Africa's population is female with a median age of 20.5 years. Africa's female population is relatively young, with 39.9% of the female population under the age of 15. This figure provides enormous opportunity for physical activity and sport at an early age. Africa is, however, a harsh continent when considering that only 3.7% of the female population is over the age of 65 (<http://en.worldstat.info/Africa>).

Africa exhibits great differences in cultural and religious beliefs and practices. Cultures and religious practices that originated within the continent of Africa are referred to as *traditional* cultures; religious practices handed down orally from generation to generation until today. Examples of traditional religions and cultures are those of the Yoruba, Serer and Igbo peoples. The majority of Africans practice either Christianity or Islam and Africans often combine them with practice of their traditional beliefs and culture. Religions such as the Baha'i Faith, Judaism, Buddhism and Rastafarianism are also practised in Africa. This diversity has been, and still is, a major influence on gender equality and how physical education, sport and physical activity for women and girls are valued and practiced within individual African countries.

Colonisation left its mark on Africa's political, cultural, economic, administrative and social systems. In almost all African countries traces of colonisation are found in governance systems, language, cultures, sport and education systems. A timeline of colonisation indicates that the first wave of colonisation of Africa happened in ancient times and came from Southern Europe (Greeks and Phoenicians) and Western Asia who colonised North Africa while people from Southeast Asia colonised Madagascar. Arab merchants established trade settlements in North, West and East Africa in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The big scramble for Africa came in 1885 when the Berlin Conference formulated international guidelines for the colonisation of Africa. European countries like Germany, Belgium, Britain, France, Italian, Portugal and Spain added parts of Africa as overseas colonies. The main period of decolonisation of Africa started after World War II and was completed in the majority of Africa by 1980 (KAPHONYA, 1994). The legacy of colonisation is today still seen in the division of African countries into Francophone (French speaking), Anglophone (English

speaking) and Portuguese-speaking countries. The under-development of modern Africa is often blamed on the colonial era. Despite this accusation, the colonial era introduced formal physical education systems as well as new sports to Africa.

As a result of the decolonisation of Africa, the African Union (AU) was formed in 1999 to accelerate the process of integration into the global economy and to rid Africa of the remaining remnants of colonisation and to promote international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. AU member states advocate for economic, political and social integration in the continent through economic regions (e.g. the Community of Sahel-Saharan States [CEN SAD], the East African Community [EAC], the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS], the Southern African Development Community [SADEC], the AU Commission, the Pan-African Parliament, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, the Court of Justice and Specialised Technical Committees and Financial Institutions such as the African Monetary Fund. The AU Commission plays a key role in the day-to-day vision and management of the AU. The mainstreaming of gender in all strategic plans, policies, declarations, and programmes is advocated through the AU Commission. The status of girls and women in physical education and sport is specifically addressed by the Commission Portfolio of Human Resources, Science and Technology (e.g. education and youth) and the Commission Portfolio of Social Affairs (e.g. sports and culture. AU member states have various forms of government that include presidential republics, parliamentary republics, parliamentary constitutional monarchies, absolute monarchies and military dictatorships. Under each of these governmental forms, the role of girls and women in broader society and in physical education and sport are handled differently.

## **Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women in Africa**

Physical education and sport are not new to Africa. Participation in physical activities by both females and males in traditional African societies thrived before

colonization. Although physical activity was embedded in the culture of communities, religious and cultural values and norms dictated access, opportunity and form of these activities for girls and women. Understanding the dynamics of African cultures and social systems is, therefore, at the heart of understanding gender equity in African sport and physical education. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the patriarchal social system in some countries where decision-making power resides in the hands of males undoubtedly enforces gender stereotyping in Africa. Some of the challenges and barriers girls and women face are illustrated in the publication *Gender, Sport and Development in Africa: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Patterns of Representations and Marginalizations* edited by Jimoh Shehu (1999). Despite many challenges and barriers to access and opportunities for girls and women, Africa still produces inspirational women in many areas of physical education and sport. The stories of some of these girls and women are told and celebrated in this publication.

## **Africa and the International Movement for Women and Sport**

Gender equity in sport has been on the agendas of the international movement for women and sport for decades. Several international organizations advocate for the plight of women and sport and aim to link women from different countries in a common cause namely improving the status of girls and women in sport. Although the international movement for women and sport have been in place since the 20<sup>th</sup> century and claims to be globally inclusive, the needs and contexts of women from Africa seems to be largely neglected (HARGREAVES, 1999). In an overview of the contribution of the international movement for women and sport, Hargreaves (1999) stated that international organizations held a distinctly middle-class, elitist and very white Western educational and cultural hegemonic stance. She claims that the West was at the centre of knowledge production and practices. "Those who came from outside the West, celebrated sameness with the West, rather than difference from the West" (HARGREAVES, 1999, p. 463). International associations and organizations such as the International Association of Physical

Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW), the IOC Commission of Women and Sport, and the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) did, however, occasionally advocate for improving the plight of girls and women and sport in Africa.

The African Union is the continental organization that drives the unity of Africa and advocate for social justice for all. The year 2015 is declared as the year of "Women's Empowerment" in Africa and gender equity in all spheres of society, including sport, is central to the theme of the year. 2015 also marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women where the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) was agreed on by the world, an ambitious undertaking on the role and status of girls and women in society that sadly no country has fully realized yet. The "Year of Women's Empowerment" in Africa also sees the end of the Millennium Development Goals and the launch of the post-2015 development goals. Whether this year (2015) dedicated to women in Africa will significantly transform the role and position of girls and women in Africa or not depends upon how opportunities are created and seized by governments and NGOs in African countries, female leadership in physical education and sport and individual African girls and women on grass roots levels.

## **Policies and Declarations advocating for girls and women and sport in Africa**

Global policies and declarations on women and women in sport specifically recognize the significance of gender equity and physical activity and sport as instruments for social change. Policies and declarations in this regard cover a long timeline that spans from 1948 until today. Some of these significant global policies and declarations include:

- UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) where access to physical activity for all human beings is recognized as a human right.

- UNESCO Charter of Physical Education and Sport (1978).
- The Brighton Declaration (1984) regarded as the seminal declaration on women and sport.
- IWG Windhoek Call for Action (1998) on women and sport.
- MINEPS I – V Declarations (1976-2013).
- IAPESGW Stellenbosch Importance Statement on Women and Sport (2009).
- IAPESGW/INDER Cuba "Adelante Muchachas" Declaration (2013).
- Brighton Plus Helsinki Declaration (2014).

The above are merely examples of global declarations and do not claim to represent a complete and comprehensive timeline. The view can be expressed that for girls and women in developing countries, including Africa, who are outside the global circuit of conferences, agendas and resolutions, these declarations and policies seem like a talk show as it does not drastically change their position.

The existence of these declarations and policies, however, resonated on the continent of Africa with a number of policies aimed to guide physical activity and sport specifically for women of Africa. In the 1990s after the abolishment of Apartheid in South Africa, Women and Sport South Africa (WASSA) formulated the National Charter for Women and Sport South Africa and was described as a turning point in the sporting fortunes of girls and women. This Charter complemented all local, provincial, national and international charters, laws, codes, covenants and regulations relating to gender equality and women and sport and recreation, particularly the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Brighton Declaration on Women in Sport, the Charter of the United Nations, the United

Nations Platform for Action, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) preamble. The overriding aim was to develop a sporting culture that enables and values the full involvement of South African women in every aspect of sport and recreation. Africa's support for equity in women and sport is also reflected as signatories of the seminal Brighton Declaration. African heads of government, the African Women in Sport Association (AWISA), Sports Ministers of southern Africa, the Supreme Council of Sport in Africa and national African sports organizations were all signatories of the Brighton Declaration.

A considerable number of African countries as well as regional African governance structures within Africa directly and indirectly address the issue of girls and women and sport in their Treaties, Protocols and Policies. The South African Development Community (SADC) forms part of the African Union (AU) and the SADC's Protocol on Culture, Information and Sports is a case in point. In this Protocol the national governments of Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe acknowledge that culture, information and sport play is a *sine qua non* for the integration of African societies. Article 9 of Chapter Two of the Protocol refers to gender and states that governments shall co-operate in ensuring gender equality and equity in the areas of information and sport in light of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development. Chapter Three, Article 24, more specifically aims to attain the goal to promote active participation by stakeholders in sport and recreation activities with special emphasis on women, children and persons with disabilities.

Regional and inter-continental action plans acknowledge the improved access and increased participation of girls and women in sport through the Olympic Movement's resources. The Kuwait Action Plan (2013) as outcome and legacy of the 1<sup>st</sup> Afro-Asian Forum on Women and Sport notes that women's leadership participation on the continents of Africa and Asia has not increased at the same pace as on-field participation due to multiple

challenges. The Kuwait Action Plan, therefore, calls for the development and implementation of succession plans for young women to become officials and leaders at all levels of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA) and Asia (OSA).

The position and right of girls and women with disabilities in Africa to have access and opportunity to physical education and sport is championed by the African Paralympic Committee (APC) or the African Sports Confederation of Disabled (ASCOD). ASCOD is an organization based in Cairo, Egypt with an African membership of 40 National Paralympic Committees. The African Sports Confederation of Disabled (ASCOD) Policy on disabled women and girls participating in sport (2002) protects and advocates the right of girls and women in this regard.

The notion of "Change" is often attached to global conferences and declarations on women and sport. This tendency is first noted in the Brighton Declaration in 1984 with the theme "Challenge of Change" and perpetuated throughout subsequent IWG world conferences with the themes of "Reaching out for Change"; "Investing in Change"; "Participating in Change"; "Play, Think, Change" to the 2014 theme "Lead the Change, Be the Change". The Kigali Declaration (Rwanda) exemplifies the theme "Lead the Change, Be the Change" in African Declarations on Women and Sport.

The Association of Kigali Women in Sports (AKWOS) under the leadership of **Félicité Rwemalika** issued the Kigali Declaration on Gender Equity in Sports for Social change in 2008 in Rwanda in Central Africa. The Kigali Declaration proposed strategies to RIWAS to promote women empowerment in sports for social change. The stories of women associated with AKWOS will be told later in this publication as examples of how they embraced physical activity and sport for social change.

## Physical Education for girls in Africa

Physical activity is an integral part of traditional African culture through its evolution to modern day Africa. Mastery of fundamental physical skills is essential for survival in many African communities. Physical activity forms the basis of African indigenous games, dances, initiation rites and rituals and the pastoral way of life of a number of African countries. Traditional physical education and sport existed long before the European colonists and western education models arrived in Africa and introduced formal forms of western physical education to Africa. Rigid western colonial models of physical education focused on physical drills, marching, gymnastic stunts and calisthenics while sports included football, cricket, rugby, athletics and netball. The latter two sports were the only options available to girls (AMUSA; TORIOLA, 2010). Missionaries also influenced the model of physical education in Africa. Emphasis was placed on personal hygiene and health education in missionary schools that would produce a healthy and sound body and character that would form the basis of an ideal colonial citizen (WAMUKOYA, 1994). Scholars (AMUSA; TORIOLA, 2010; BURNETT-VAN TONDER, 1985; VAN DEVENTER, 2002) are convinced that the colonial model of physical education did not respect African endemic physical activities and the curriculum content had no relevance to indigenous African populations. Amusa (1999) is convinced that the colonial model of physical education developed Physical training (PT) and not Physical Education (PE). The post-colonial era in physical education also saw no significant gains over decades of transformation according to Hardman (2003). Physical education curricula and practices still reflect how it is done in the western world and in the western world, as in Africa, there is a downward turn in the value placed upon physical education. Bressan already argued in 1994 that if physical education and sports programs are to succeed in Africa, they must be developed, designed and nurtured in Africa and not superimpose western models on the diversity of Africa. The demands and present conditions of Africa are not compatible with that of Europe or any other continent.

Amusa and Toriola (2010) advocate for a unique African physical education model based on:

- Contemporary needs and challenges of African societies.
- Respect for the diverse cultural heritage of African people.
- Materials and infrastructures that are African.
- African customs and values.

Physical education curriculum developers must be committed to change. Curriculum developers with innovative and charismatic leadership skills and strategies on continental and national levels are needed to break free from the constraints of western physical education models. The story and efforts of **Doreen Solomons (South Africa)**, a former vice president of IAPESGW, is an example of committed leadership in the transformation of physical education curricula in South Africa and will be celebrated in this publication.

## Female African Athletes and Role Models

The achievements of females in sport in Africa are often over-powered by the media focusing more on the achievements of male athletes. The result of this tendency is a lack of role models for young girls and women to aspire to as well as underplaying the athletic performances of the women of Africa. Africa, nevertheless, have provided extra-ordinary female role models and athletes over history. The history of the Olympic Games indicates that female athletes won gold medals at the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Olympic Games as far back as the 1952 Summer Olympic Games in Helsinki, Finland. Some of the gold medal winners made history for their countries by being the “first or the only” to achieve a performance. The inspirational story of **Nawal El Moutawakel** from Morocco

who became the first female Muslim born on the continent of Africa to win an Olympic Gold medal in the 400m hurdles for women will be told. The performances of South African **Natalie du Toit**, the first woman from Africa to compete in both a Paralympic and Olympic Games, the story of **Meriem Cherni Mizouni**, the first female Tunisian swimming Olympian at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal and the achievements of **Ethiopian Derartu Tulu**, the first black African woman to win an Olympic gold medal will be featured. Although female boxing was only recently included in the Olympic Games the inspirational story of **Esther Phiri**, the Zambian boxer will be told as an example of a female role model to girls and women in Zambia.

## **Female Trailblazers using Sport and Physical Activity for Social Change**

One of the common myths about Africa is that all of Africa needs aid to help it develop. The diversity and economic reality of Africa certainly causes it to accept humanitarian aid in many ways. At the same time there are hundreds of unsung heroes within African communities that are making a difference at grass roots level. Having said that, the involvement of contributions and initiatives of global organizations in the field of sport-for-development need to be recognized and are appreciated by African countries. Global organizations working actively in Africa in the field of sport for development projects include the UN Sport for Development and Peace, UNICEF, SCORE, the Laureus Foundation, the International Olympic Committee, Sport Development, Right to Play, Women Win and the Swiss Academy for Development to mention just a few deserving organizations. The main emphasis of the work of the afore-mentioned organizations is aimed at influencing social change through physical education and sport.

Apart from global organizations using physical education and sport as catalysts for social change, a number of organizations and projects emerged from within Africa, for Africans. Examples of good and successful practices in this regard are the Mathare Youth

Sports Association in Kenya, the Right to Dream Academy in West Africa, the Association of Kigali Women in Sports (AKWOS) in Rwanda, Moving the Goalposts (MTG) in Kenya and the L'Heure Joyeuse in Casablanca, Morocco. The inspirational stories of some of the participants, leaders and coaches are highlighted in this volume on Africa.

It is, however, not only elite athletes who act as trailblazers for girls and women in sport on the continent of Africa. Exceptional female coaches, chairs, sport leaders and managers who operate on grass roots, continental and international levels are also showcased in this book. **Félicité Rwemalika** from Rwanda who set up the Association of Kigali Women in Sport (AKWOS) to facilitate reconciliation and healing among women and girls from diverse ethnic groups after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, are saluted, together with Kenyan **Maqulate Onyango**, of the successful MYSA project in the slums of Nairobi, Malawian **Flora Mwandira**, the first female Chef de Mission to a Malawi national team to the Olympic Games as well as Zimbabwean **Eugenia Chidhakwa** who leads the Women and Sport Commission of the African Union Region 5.

Many sport-for-development projects are run in Africa to improve the lives and opportunities for girls and women. Girls and women with a passion for their work and other citizens do exceptional work in many areas of the African continent through organizations like Move the Goalposts (MTG), AKWOS, Women Win Fellowships, Safe Spaces and Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA). In this volume the stories of **Maqulate Onyango** (MYSA, Kenya), **Grace Nyinawumuntu** (AKWOS, Rwanda), **Félicité Rwemalika** (AKWOS, Rwanda), **Janet Motah, Rachel Muthoga, Jackline Mwende, Lydia Kasiwa, Lilian Mbeyu, Frimmilla Nine, Dorcas Amakobe** (Move the Goalposts, Kenya), **Wadzanai Katsande** (Edmund Garwe Trust, Zimbabwe), **Tendai Gambiza** (Zimbabwe), **Emertha** (AKWOS, Rwanda), **Peninah Nthenya Musimi** (Safe Spaces Mathare, Kenya) and **Majidah Nantanda** (Uganda) are shared to feature the dedication and dreams of girls and women on grass roots level in Africa.

The contributions showcased in this publication represent only the ears of the hippopotamus. The hard work of many other girls and women in physical education and

sport in Africa often goes unnoticed. To the unknown and unsung heroines of sport-for-development in Africa, we also pay homage and assure them that their contributions, although not specifically mentioned, are highly appreciated.

## **Female African sports journalists**

The media industry, and particularly sports media, is a traditional bastion of male dominance in Africa. Yet Africa has seen a rise in influential female sports journalists who provide inspiration to female journalism students as well as existing female journalists. The stories of female sports journalists from Egypt, Cameroon, Kenya and South Africa are showcased in this volume.

## **Scholarly work and efforts of women to advocate for Physical Education and Sport**

Practical work regarding physical education and sport for girls and women is underpinned by scholars who report on and drive the issue through scientific work. Examples of female scholars who provided valuable work in this regard include Edith Katzenellenbogen, Beatrice Wiid, Isabella Nel, Denise Jones, Cora Burnett, Anneliese Goslin (South Africa), Eugenia Chidhakwa (Zimbabwe) and Adanje Mwisukha (Kenya) as well as other female academics at universities in Egypt, Uganda and Kenya.

## **Approach to this Volume on Inspirational Women and Sport in Africa**

The narratives in this volume on Africa are organized and presented according to selected generic themes in women and sport on the continent rather than by geographical

representation of the 54 countries in Africa. This volume does not attempt to provide an historical overview of the status of girls and women in Physical Education and Sport in different African countries. The chapter layout and the content of this volume attempt to give inspirational girls and women from 13 African countries a platform to give voice to their stories and testimonies on the changing power and potential of physical education and sport and how it impacts on the quality of their lives. This volume provides a snapshot of narratives and does not claim to cover the stories of all girls and women involved in physical activity and sport in Africa.

To the women who were willing to contribute and to the organizations allowing me to use their inspirational stories, I am grateful. You are all acknowledged as co-authors to this volume.

The following contributors are acknowledged as co-authors:

- Flora Mwandira (Malawi)
- Ruth Tumbolombo (Malawi)
- Felicite Rwemalika (Rwanda)
- Doreen Solomons (South Africa)
- Cheryl Roberts (South Africa)
- Maqualte Onyango (Kenya)
- Dr Andanje Mwisukha (Kenya)
- Women Win Organisation (Netherlands)

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**ADVOCACY AND  
POLICY MAKING  
FOR GENDER  
EQUALITY  
IN PHYSICAL  
EDUCATION AND  
SPORT IN AFRICA**



# INTRODUCTION

Access to and opportunity for engagement in physical education and sport for girls and women are ultimately determined by advocacy and policy making. Seminal and guiding policies on girls and women in physical education and sport exist on the global level. The table below provides an overview of the plethora of global and regional policies referring to and advocating for the position of girls and women in sport:

**Table 1** – Timeline of selected global and regional conferences, declarations and policy documents relevant to women's position in society and sport (KLUKA; GOSLIN, 2015)

DATE	CONFERENCES, POLICIES, DECLARATIONS, FRAMEWORKS, RESOLUTIONS
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations)
1974	World Population Conference, Bucharest (United Nations)
1976	MINEPS I (UNESCO). Paris
1978	Charter of physical education and sport (UNESCO)
1979	Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW)
1984	International Conference on Population, Mexico City (United Nations)
1985	World Conference to review and appraise achievements of the United States decade for women, equality, development and peace, Nairobi (United Nations)
1988	MINEPS II (UNESCO), Moscow Moscow Declaration
1989	Convention on the rights of the child (UN)
1990	The World Summit for Children (United Nations)
1993	World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna (United Nations)
1994	Brighton declaration on women and sport – 1st world conference on women and sport (IWG). "Challenge of Change"
1994	Cairo Program of Action spawning from the Conference on Population and Development, Cairo (United Nations)
1994	Women and Sport Working Group (IOC)
1995	Beijing Platform for Action
1996	Manila Declaration on Women and Sport - ICHPERSD 1st Asian women and sport conference

Continued

Continuation

DATE	CONFERENCES, POLICIES, DECLARATIONS, FRAMEWORKS, RESOLUTIONS
1996, 2000, 2004 2008, 2012	IOC resolutions: 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 (See 2012 below)
1998	Windhoek Call for Action – 2nd world conference on women and sport (IWG). "Reaching out for Change"
1999	Berlin Agenda for Action First World Summit on Physical Education
1999	MINEPS III (UNESCO), Uruguay Declaration of Punta del Este
2000	Helsinki spirit – European women in sport (EWS) conference
2000	Millennium Development Goals (United Nations)
2000	Beijing +5 Declaration
2001	Asian women and sport action plan – 1st Asian conference (Asian working group on women and sport)
2002	Montreal communique – 3rd world conference on women and sport (IWG). "Investing in Change"
2002	United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace Report: Sport as a tool for development and peace: Towards achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals
2002	African sports confederation of disabled (ASCOD) policy on disabled women and girls participating in sport
2002	European parliament resolution on women and sport
2004	MINEPS IV (UNESCO), Athens. Declaration of Athens
2005	United Nations International Year of Sport and Physical Education
2005	Beijing + 10 Declaration
2005	Maggingen Commitment for Physical Education 2 <sup>nd</sup> World Summit on Physical Education
2006	Kumamoto commitment – 4th world conference on women and sport (IWG) "Participating in Change"
2006	UN action plan on sport for development and peace
2006	UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities
2008	<i>Accept and respect</i> declaration – IAPESGW/Sultan Qaboos University, Oman – International study week
2008	Shafallah Declaration. Doha, Qatar
2009	IAPESGW Stellenbosch Importance Statement
2010	Sydney Scoreboard – 5 <sup>th</sup> world conference on women and sport (IWG) "Play, Think, Change"
2010	Beijing + 15 Declaration

Continued

Continuation

DATE	CONFERENCES, POLICIES, DECLARATIONS, FRAMEWORKS, RESOLUTIONS
2010	The Toronto Charter for Physical Activity: A global call for action.
2012	Los Angeles declaration of the 5th IOC conference on women and sport
2013	IAPESGW/INDER Declaration "Adelante Muchachas", Cuba Moving together towards a better world
2013	MINEPS V (UNESCO), Berlin Declaration of Berlin
2014	Brighton Plus Helsinki– 6th world conference on women and sport (IWG) "Lead the Change, Be the Change"

From the above listed documents, the Brighton Declaration stands out as the seminal declaration that provided impetus and focus to the international movement for equality in sport. From the above table it is also evident that although there is no shortage of declarations that advocate the right of girls and women to quality physical education and sport, the desired position has not yet been achieved. In many parts of Africa the gap between the intentions of global declarations and reality is still wide open. When one considers the influence of traditional cultural norms and the reality of genocide in Africa, the challenges to implement and sustain gender equality in sport escalates. That, however, does not imply that women back down from these challenges. The inspirational work and continued advocacy of **Félicité Rwemalika** from **Rwanda** is a testimony to the strong spirit of African women.

The Rwandan Genocide was a genocidal mass slaughter of Tutsi and moderate Hutu in Rwanda by members of the Hutu majority and started on April 6, 1994, an airplane carrying Habyarimana and Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira was shot down on its descent into Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, returning from a summit in Tanzania. During the approximate 100-day period from April 7, 1994, to mid-July, an estimated 500,000–1,000,000 Rwandans were killed, constituting as much as 20% of the country's total population and 70% of the Tutsi then living in Rwanda. The genocide was planned by members of the core political elite known as the akazu, many of whom occupied positions at top levels of the national government. Perpetrators came from the ranks of the

Rwandan army, the National Police (gendarmerie), government-backed militias including the *Interahamwe* and *Impuzamugambi*, and the Hutu civilian population.

The genocide had a lasting and profound impact on Rwanda and its neighbouring countries. The pervasive use of war rape caused a spike in HIV infection, including babies born of rape to newly infected mothers; many households were headed by orphaned children or widows. The destruction of infrastructure and a severe depopulation of the country crippled the economy, challenging the nascent government to achieve rapid economic growth and stabilization. Today, Rwanda has two public holidays commemorating the genocide. The national commemoration period begins with Genocide Memorial Day on April 7 and concludes with Liberation Day on July 4. The week following April 7 is designated an official week of mourning. The Rwandan Genocide served as the impetus for creating the International Criminal Court to eliminate the need for ad hoc tribunals to prosecute those accused in future incidents of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The international world was heavily criticised for not interfering in the genocide despite the United Nations' declarations on crimes against humanity ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org); SEMUJANGA, 2003).

Twenty one years after the Rwandan genocide of 1994 when between 250 000 and 500 000 women were raped during the genocide, a new generation of women is emerging in Rwanda. Women's rights have progressed immensely. It is said that 64% of Rwandan parliamentarians are women – the highest proportion of any parliament in the world. The rights of women are enshrined in the Rwandan constitution. Equal numbers of boys and girls receive primary and secondary education, maternal mortality is lower and the birth rate is dropping. It seems as if Rwanda is contributing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in this regard ([www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014)).

## Félicité Rwemalika as “Changemaker” in Rwanda

Women played a vital role in rebuilding Rwanda after the genocide. Félicité Rwemalika is an example of such a woman that can best be described as a “changemaker” in the true sense of the word. The profile below was taken from “Ashoka Innovators for the Public” when Félicité Rwemalika was elected to the Ashoka Fellowship in 2012 ([www.ashoka.org/fellow/felicite-rwemalika](http://www.ashoka.org/fellow/felicite-rwemalika)). Ashoka represents a network of social entrepreneurs worldwide, founded by Bill Drayton in 1980. The vision of Ashoka is to advance an “Everyone a Changemaker World”, where anyone can apply the skills of change making to solve complex social problems. This means equipping more people – including young people - with the skill sets and a connection to purpose so that they can contribute ideas and effectively solve problems at whatever scale is needed in their immediate family and broader community. According to Ashoka’s mission statement they aim to support social entrepreneurs who are leading and collaborating with change makers, in a team model that addresses the fluidity of a rapidly evolving society. Ashoka believes that anyone can learn and apply the critical skills of empathy, team work, leadership and change making to be successful in the modern world ([www.ashoka.org](http://www.ashoka.org)). On the continent of Africa Ashoka operates in Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda.

The contributions of Félicité Rwemalika reflect the vision of Ashoka, namely that everyone is a social change maker. Félicité brought the global policies and declaration on women and sport right back to Rwanda with an African home grown social change initiative when she founded the Association of Kigali Women in Sports (AKWOS) in 2002. Félicité acknowledged the social reality of the post-genocide Rwanda and made a conscious decision to improve the situation of women and girls through sport and physical activity.

Born into a large family of thirteen children, Félicité is the second born and the first of eleven girls. Her father worked as a medical doctor in Congo, where she spent her childhood. Félicité’s father coached community football teams on a volunteer basis when

he had time, and often took Félicité along - exposing her to the positive powers of sports, and football, in particular.

After Félicité education, she qualified as a midwife and married a dentist who practiced in Western Uganda. Her husband, however, left his practice to join the liberation forces of Rwanda in the early 1990s. Following this change in her family, Félicité - alone and with no other support—had to quickly adjust and find a way to supplement her income to take care of their four children. She started several entrepreneurial ventures, including a restaurant in Kampala followed by a beverages distributorship in Rwanda and then, the first post-genocide hair salon in Rwanda. Félicité quickly rose to become one of Rwanda's shining stars as far as business entrepreneurship is concerned, especially as a woman. Félicité's work inspired many to set up similar businesses, especially in the hair salon industry.

The more successful Félicité became in business, the more interested she became in the changes that were taking place in Rwanda as it recovered from the genocide. In a country that was focused on reconstruction and development, Félicité was quick to see that women were not contributing at the same pace and level of their male counterparts. As one of the few successful, recognized, and respected women leaders in society for her work, Félicité believes it's possible to get more women engaged in development.

With over 60 percent of the population living on less than one dollar a day, poverty is a significant societal challenge in Rwanda (and many other African countries). Additionally, 70 percent of Rwandan women live in rural areas, which are the hardest hit by poverty and its related challenges; a staggering 62 percent of female-headed rural households live below the poverty line. These numbers suggest that women in rural areas are overwhelmingly afflicted by poverty.

This is a common scenario across many African countries, but Rwanda's recent history makes the nature of female poverty unique. Now, just eighteen years after the genocide that saw ethnic tensions escalate into a massacre within a matter of days,

Rwanda is still recovering from the psychological wounds that were inflicted during this period. Women were uniquely affected as thousands were widowed; raped (estimated at between 250,000 and 500,000 women and girls over the 100-day period); and infected with HIV and AIDS among a host of other sexually transmitted diseases (70 percent of all sexually assaulted women were infected with HIV/AIDS). These women were then left to deal with the consequences of these experiences with little practical knowledge or assistance on these matters. The resulting trauma and low self-confidence pushed most women into isolation in rural areas, where a majority of them continue to live today.

This matter was further exacerbated by the deeply entrenched patriarchal culture, which defined the role of women as that of a follower and submissive home caretaker. Thus, according to cultural standards, women were not expected to play active leadership roles in their own lives, families or communities. This means that women - especially those marginalized during the genocide - did not have the skills or societal support necessary to improve their circumstances.

Post-genocide economic activity has largely been limited to male participation in urban areas. Félicité was one of a handful of women who had the skills and courage to venture into business so soon after the 1994 genocide. The general lack of economic opportunity, especially in rural areas indicated that women might be locked into poverty without the societal framework to provide the skills and support needed for them to improve their livelihoods. Consequentially, most women have resigned themselves to subsistence farming as their primary income source.

In a country where patriarchy and genocide have historically marginalized women, Félicité Rwemalika is using female participation in football to build self-confidence and social support among poor rural women in Rwandan society; enabling them to improve their lives and further the development of their communities. Félicité is leveraging the structure of teams and tournaments to facilitate women's educational and economic empowerment. Félicité is enabling Rwandan women to gain full social and economic

citizenship by engaging them in the male-dominated sport of football. Through the Association of Kigali Women in Sports she is using their participation to challenge the cultural and historical status quo, demonstrating their ability to improve their lives and develop their communities. The spirit of teamwork across ethnic divides within her football teams creates the self-confidence, support, and social capital needed for women to address key social challenges of poverty, healthcare, and education for themselves and their families. Félicité has transformed Rwanda's social structure by making women's football a widely accepted sport, and influenced government policy reform to further entrench sports for women and girls in and outside of formal education institutions.

Félicité understands that in addition to sport being a confidence and tolerance builder, these teams can also serve as an important entry point for women's education and economic empowerment. She is leveraging the architecture that she has spent over a decade building—the hundreds of female football teams and tournaments across the country—to create educational and economic opportunities for poor rural women. Every sporting tournament is transformed into an educational experience by bringing in institutions and individuals related to various topic areas. Additionally, Félicité is organizing the football teams into farming cooperatives to engage women in agribusiness; thereby creating systems through which women can raise their communities out of poverty. Thus, Félicité's idea uses sports not only as a confidence builder, but as an entry point to equip rural women with the skills and support needed to improve their livelihoods and communities.

Through the founding of the Association of Kigali women in Sports, the use of sport, and specifically football, was an important strategic choice for Félicité. She elected to pursue her goals through sport for its ability to foster the development of teamwork, leadership, social tolerance, and inclusion. More importantly, she understood that women's participation in sports (especially football) would have the shock-value needed to radically shift mind-sets about women in Rwandan society. Specifically, female engagement in football would be the hardest and therefore, the most powerful sport to change. If she could engage women in football, it would be a powerful statement that would help women

to gain self-confidence, and for society to see them as capable and equal stakeholders in the community.

Before deciding to focus on football, Félicité asked a multitude of people (men and women in and outside the field of sports) for their opinion on women's football. The response she got was a resounding, "No way". People believed that football was a sport strictly meant for men, and that women would be incapable of playing it. Some even thought that it was immoral for women to wear shorts and lift up their legs in a kicking motion, as would be expected in a game of football. It was this negativity and total rejection of the idea that convinced her that she had her eye on the right sport.

Félicité's strategy segments females into groups of girls, women at the local level, and women at the national level, and ensures mechanisms for engagement and policy support for each. In 2002 Félicité set out to ensure that sport (and football in particular) was common practice for girls in schools, so that every girl gets a chance to engage in the sport. She advocated for the inclusion of girls in Physical Education sessions in schools all over Rwanda. Working with the Ministry of Education, she created an incentive program in which school girls participating in sports were awarded scholarships to support their education. Additionally, Félicité partnered with companies like Nike that donated sports uniforms and equipment to schools to encourage their participation.

Outside of the school system, Félicité targeted rural women by organizing them into football teams and ran tournaments at the provincial level. With teams formed in every district of the country, she started Rwanda's national Champions League for women's football—now one of the most popular football tournaments in the country. She successfully lobbied the government to create a women's sports desk at every provincial government office, and went further to advocate for a portion of the provincial sports budget to be dedicated to women's sports activities. Félicité's advocacy efforts extended even further to push for the formation of a national council for women in sports as part of the national sports council. She helped form Rwanda's national women's football

team by selecting the best players from her local teams and has even created a training program for female referees and coaches at both the local and national levels. Earlier this year, five of the women referees trained through Félicité's program were certified by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) to officiate international football matches anywhere around the world.

Félicité has always seen football teams and tournaments for the value they represent beyond the game, and was quick to understand that she could use them as an educational and economic platform. After all, the teams comprised mostly of uneducated rural-based women. She harnessed the power of the team and tournament structure that she had created to promote education among the women. Félicité tagged a theme to every tournament, and then went on to invite institutions within relevant fields to train the women and fans during half-time, before and after the match. For example, she has tagged matches with themes including agriculture, HIV/AIDS, and gender violence; thus providing information on subjects that are highly relevant to Rwandan women. Félicité has worked with several government ministries and citizen organizations over the years, to the extent that her teams are often independently sought out by institutions looking to reach an audience of rural women.

Using sport, Félicité has succeeded in getting Rwandan women from behind the shadows and empowered them to charge boldly forward to define their roles in leadership and development of their country. With over 100 football teams (and more forming quickly) all over the country, Félicité is transforming the lives of thousands of women and their families. She continues to find ways that she can leverage this social architecture to further the development of female leadership and empowerment. She is now focused on turning these teams of women into farming cooperatives so that they can engage in group agribusiness to improve their livelihoods. 300 women are already actively engaged in cooperative activity on their respective teams, and Félicité is focused on turning more teams into cooperatives over the next three years; ultimately engaging thousands of women in agribusiness activities, such as crop farming and animal grazing.

Félicité's work is been recognized internationally. She presented at Nike's Sport for Social Change project and she embraces every opportunity to engage with organizations in Uganda, Congo, and other post-conflict areas where she feels her model would make a difference to rural women. In her own words: "When people in our community come to watch the girls play, we take the opportunity to talk about issues like HIV/AIDS, or reconciliation. They open their eyes and ears to new messages because they are laughing and enjoying and. because they are relaxed. They forget about hunger and their problems". ([www.womenwin.org](http://www.womenwin.org)). Rwanda was torn apart by a destructive civil war and genocide in 1994. Félicité Rwemalika saw football as a powerful instrument to re-engage and empower girls and women. Since 2001 she has successfully introduced football in all provinces of Rwanda, and the model has recently been applied in the Democratic Republic of Congo as well.

Through the Association of Kigali Women in Sports (AKWOS) Félicité also contributed to policy making through the formulation of the Kigali Declaration on Gender Equity in Sports for social change. The Kigali Declaration can be regarded as a significant example of women in Africa's efforts to bring global policies on gender equality closer to home. The full Kigali Declaration is given below as a testimonial to the inspirational work of Félicité Rwemalika and the executive members of AKWOS on the continent of Africa. ([www.mujoydeporte.org](http://www.mujoydeporte.org)).

### **THE KIGALI DECLARATION ON GENDER EQUITY IN SPORTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

We the members of the Regional Initiative for Women Advancement in Sports (RIWAS), a regional initiative whose establishment was spearheaded by the Association of Kigali Women In Sports (AKWOS), with representatives from government partners, Non- governmental organizations, civil society organizations, development partners and UN agencies attending the international conference on Gender Equity in Sports for Social change hosted by AKWOS held in Kigali, Rwanda, from 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

**Having testified** from presentations given by the Minister of Sports and Culture in Rwanda, Representative from Rwanda Forum For Women Parliamentarians Representative from Rwanda National Police, Representative from United Nations Development Fund for Women, Representative from Rwanda National Commission On HIV/AIDS, Representative from Olympic committee and representatives from the non- governmental organizations.

**Reaffirming** the provisions of the regional and international frameworks for promotion of Gender Equality and Women's empowerment such as the Beijing Platform of Action, CEDAW, Millennium Development goals, Security Council resolution 1325, the General recommendation on violence Against Women, the convention on the Rights of the child (1989). General Assembly resolution 58/5 that recommends advocacy using sports as a means of promoting education, Health and Peace.

**Aware** of the still existing cultural barriers to girl child and women participation in sports, cultural attitudes and practices that inhibit girl child and women self-confidence.

**Aware** that women and girl child HIV prevalence rates are higher than those of the male counterparts in the region.

**Aware** of the limited networking between organizations involved in promoting gender equity in sports for social change.

**Deeply concerned** about the gender gaps in terms of completion and limitation to women participation in Science and Technology.

**Aware** of the high numbers of women living below the poverty line and limited women's skills for income generation.

**Recognizing** the high rates of generated sexual violence against the girls and women. Observing the limited support for women participation in sports terms of financial and technical support for women empowerment in Sports.

**Committed to** work towards promotion of women empowerment in sports for social change in close partnership with governments, development partners, civil society, and UN agencies.

**Convinced** that promotion of women's rights through sports requires a holistic approach and combined efforts.

**We recommend the following as strategies for RIWAS to promote women empowerment in sports for social change**

**At national level:**

- 1 To mobilize funds for Women empowerment in sports for social change.
- 2 Member states to decentralize sports services at community level and put in place relevant mechanisms for women integration, so as to reach out to the rural women and girls.
- 3 Use the media for promotion of women's participation in sports for social change.
- 4 To facilitate campaign against SGBV using sport forum.
- 5 To sensitize communities on the importance of sport through drama, music, spot, T-shirts with specific messages.

- 6 To use sports forums as platforms for social change in regard to women's rights.
- 7 To facilitate and support networks for promotion of women empowerment in sports and youth initiatives for social change.
- 8 Advocate for training women as members of women councils and women teachers as sport coaches.
- 9 To establish women sport centres that will also facilitate awareness rising on different issues including HIV/ AIDS, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and women's rights.
- 10 To encourage and support girl child to go to school and practice sport to acquire knowledge and be able to communicate and build their self-confidence.
- 11 To campaign on behaviour change in regarding HIV prevention and management to both women and men through sport forum.
- 12 To promote sports for women at universities.

**At the regional level:**

- 1 To facilitate programs for women empowerment in sports through organizing regional training programs, conferences and study tours for information sharing.
- 2 To mobilize funds and offer technical support for the operations of the Regional Initiative for Women empowerments.
- 3 To use the RIWAS Network for information sharing in regard to Women's rights, Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Women and Leadership, Girl child education

, Women's economic security, through an email network.

- 4 To develop joint programs for women empowerment in sports.
- 5 Develop and support coordination and monitoring mechanism for RIWAS activities.
- 6 RIWAS president and Secretariat will develop a one year plan of action with consultation from members. The plan of action should be ready within a period of 3 months from 23/6/2008.

#### **At the international level (Development partners)**

- 1 To provide financial and technical assistance institutional capacity building for women organizations for women empowerment in sports for social change.
- 2 Mobilise international and financial support for women empowerment in sports programs at regional, national and community level.
- 3 To provide funds for women's skills development for income generation activities through sports cooperatives.
- 4 To provide financial and technical support for strengthening and development of women sports networks.
- 5 Support the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of programmes for Women empowerment in sports.

- 6 To provide technical and financial support for developing documentation on best practices and challenges in promoting gender equality in sports for social change.
- 7 To financially and technically support initiative for girl child empowerment in sports. UNICEF and UNESCO.
- 8 AKWOS and RIWAS will organize a one day Sports Event from different countries to take place in Rwanda on the 8<sup>th</sup> of march 2009 which is normally celebrated as an International Women's Day and finalize the Action plan that will be presented to members.

## **Cheryl Mary Roberts (South Africa) – Female Olympian, Social Activist and Advocate for Gender Equality in Sport**

Cheryl Roberts is undoubtedly the most prominent activist and campaigner for gender equality in South African sport. She has written and published on sport and recreation in South Africa, including the social positioning of sport in society, women and sport, non-racial sport and the anti-apartheid sport struggle. She is a writer, sports and social justice activist, independent publisher, sports analyst and social commentator, as well as an activist who writes and speaks from grassroots to international level, on gender, social inequalities and imbalances, and sport. Cheryl Roberts played sports during the horrendous apartheid era; she chose to play "non-racial" sport because she believed in a better society for all South Africans. Cheryl Roberts is a sports champion, a coach and sports official. She has served sports as a volunteer for over 30 years, from grassroots to international levels.

Cheryl Mary Roberts was born on March 10. 1962 and grew up in Wentworth, Durban, South Africa. She has been playing table tennis since the age of 14. The game

of table tennis in which she represented South Africa in 1992 at the Barcelona Summer Olympic Games was, however, not her first choice. She started off playing tennis but there were no tennis courts in the area of Wentworth due to the political system of Apartheid in South Africa at that time. Every Sunday she had to take two buses from her home to play at the tennis courts in Sydenham. Her parents did not have a car and as a working class family they did not deem sport as important. Cheryl had no other option to play sport on her own. When she tried to join a tennis club closer to home she was told "Sorry, this is a Whites only club." So Cheryl started to play table tennis in a neighbour's garage.

She excelled at the game of table tennis and in 1985 she was chosen as Sports person of the Year by the South African Council of Sport (Sacos). She has won three national championships and more than 150 table tennis titles. She also captained her university team when she studied in England during the Apartheid years.

Cheryl started advocating for gender equality and sport in general early in her career. While she was coaching table tennis in the Townships [*a Township is a term used for a black community in South Africa*] she got know as a fighter for better sports facilities in those areas. Apart from the inequalities between white and black sport in South Africa, she also noticed the inequalities between male and female sport. In 1992 she stated "The problems in sport are not only the racial inequalities, but also the inequalities between men and women. Men believe they are better than women in sport. They refuse to change their sexist attitudes. Newspapers, which influence the way people think, also push male domination, power and control in sport. Things are difficult but we are trying to change them" (<http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/cheryl-roberts-thoraya-pandy-speak-june-1992>).

Cheryl's path in sport was not an easy one. When asked to narrate her experiences and journey in South African sport, she submitted a powerful chronicle presented below on her struggle and advocacy in sport:

# **Playing Sport For Freedom In South Africa: Advocating for People's Sport in South Africa** by Cheryl Roberts

## **My Sports Lens: Love for Freedom through Sport**

Growing up in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s meant you just could not run away or ignore your skin colour. South Africa had an institutionalized and formal policy called Apartheid which was implemented by the Nationalist government in power, from national level to local level of government and administration.

I wasn't white; was classified "Coloured" according to Apartheid legislation. This meant I was a second class citizen, was oppressed, was disenfranchised and would not have access to resources, privileges, amenities as that given to people classified white.

I open with this little explanation, so that we better understand where I'm coming from and why I pursue an equitable sports paradigm with a particular emphasis on redistribution of the sports wealth and opportunities and access to sport, for black people and working class communities.

South Africa in 2015 is a non-racial, democratic, non-sexist country according to our post-apartheid constitution; one of the world's best constitutions for honouring, acceptance and implementation of human rights. However, 20 years after our freedom was attained from oppression and apartheid, South Africa, as a country in transition, is still a society of the advantaged (the haves) and disadvantaged (the have-nots) of a minority privileged class, an emerging middle class and a majority working class.

Your social positioning reflects how you participate in life and society. If you have the means and money, you will enjoy a comfortable life. If you are a struggling worker, unemployed person, then life's offers such as sport will remain a privilege. I am not only aware of society's inequalities and wealth gaps; I also see it and experience it. I don't like to see our society so

divided, so affluent for a minority grouping and so undermining of the working class who mainly struggle and battle to survive.

I've had this social justice consciousness since I was a teenage girl, experiencing life under harsh apartheid laws and confinement to racial neighbourhoods, schools and social spaces of leisure, recreation and entertainment.

I had just entered my teen years and reading about international women tennis stars like Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova inspired me to play sport, to play tennis.

## **Apartheid Blocks Teenage Sports girl**

In my neighbourhood, called Wentworth in Durban there were no public tennis courts in the community and none in our few schools. I started hitting a tennis ball on the road with neighbour friends; got a carpenter in the hood to make a tennis bat for me. I desperately wanted to play tennis. What could I do? On the way to another neighbourhood, to my grandmother's house was a tennis park with many tennis courts. I decided I wanted to play tennis there. At home one day after school, I phoned the tennis park and asked if I could join the club. The person answering on the side said, I could become a member after paying a membership. For some reason I said I wasn't white and that was it! She told me I couldn't join the club because it was reserved for white membership only. I was a teenage girl; didn't understand this rejection. All I wanted was to play tennis but didn't have a tennis court to play on. I then found out about a tennis park reserved for "coloureds". It meant my travelling there once a week to play tennis, taking two buses to get there. I would dress in all white tennis gear and go off with my racket, eagerly awaiting my hit on the tennis court.

My first tennis racket was bought second hand and had some gut strings broken. When I hit the ball on the broken parts, the ball would get stuck and couldn't be hit. It was embarrassing for me the teenage sports girl. Fortunately, I didn't grow up poor. My father

was a welder, an artisan and worked to provide well for his family. My mother and two sisters were as supportive and encouraging of my playing sport. I was very excited when my father said he would work overtime so that I could get my own tennis racket.

My playing tennis didn't last long. Soon I began table tennis, in a neighbour's garage. About 20 players and myself would gather in the garage and have daily battles contesting hitting a small ball over a net on a table, in a confined space in a garage. If you won, you stayed on the table and kept playing. Most times I would be the only girl playing with and against the boys. Obviously, the boys dominated and I had to wait many rounds of play in between games and contestation. I had to get tougher and get stronger so I could challenge and win against the boys.

Without going into the details of my teenage sports life, I will say that I entered table tennis championships where I initially won some matches and lost in some tournaments. I practised daily because I wanted to improve my game. For me, my teenage life was about school, homework and sports practice, every day, including weekends. I went on to become provincial sports champion and South African champion in singles and doubles events.

Alongside my development in sport, was my developing social justice consciousness, although I was a school girl and playing junior sport.

## **Playing Sport for Freedom**

South Africa had an official government sport's policy under apartheid. Whites played sport for whites only clubs and sports federations and only whites were eligible to represent South Africa internationally.

South Africa's apartheid policies in society and sport were opposed within the country by the oppressed and disenfranchised people. These were the majority of people,

who were not white, but racially categorised as African, Coloured and Indian. I was an oppressed teenage sports girl. I became aware of our society's inequalities, of privileges accorded white people and atrocities committed against black people because of the colour of the skin.

Apartheid didn't allow people to play sport together. The oppressed people in South Africa formed anti-apartheid sports structures and sports federations. After being rejected by the whites-only tennis club in my home city of Durban, I found a sports home in anti-apartheid, non-racial sport. Here we played sport with human dignity and no regard for skin colour. We had no racial categorization and no racial prejudice within our sport.

As junior players in sport, we became aware that we were not involved in sport just for sport. We became aware that we were oppressed by our government, that we didn't have human rights, that we were discriminated against. Our sports federations protected us from the harshness of apartheid by providing sports development for oppressed children and youth players.

We played sport under the organization of the anti-apartheid sports structure, the South African Council on Sport (SACOS). This organisation was fierce and bold; it was also humane. Our sports leaders within SACOS were principled and rejected apartheid; demanding instead a non-racial, free South Africa that shared its resources amongst all South Africa's people.

SACOS also took a bold decision not to play international sport because our South African sports teams were not representative of South Africa as a nation but of white, apartheid South Africa. The international world supported our boycott of international sport, but white South Africans opposed it vehemently.

Inequalities and discrimination were all around me. By the time I entered university, as a 17 year old, my social justice consciousness was high.

We played sport for freedom of South Africa first and for international sport second. Our sports dreams were limited. The ceiling for our participation in sport was national sport where we would participate in South African championships. As oppressed people in South Africa, we chose this pathway through life; to play sport for freedom and to play in dignity and without racial prejudice and discrimination.

Since I was a teenage sports girl, I have spoken out against discrimination in sport and society. I always condemned apartheid; never supported apartheid's horrendous policies. I knew I wanted to live in a society that belonged to all South Africans, not only a white minority grouping.

So my consciousness for a better; equitable, generous, humane society was very much part of my involvement in sport. I loved being involved in anti-apartheid sport; I wore my badge with great honour and respect. It wasn't easy living with our choice to play anti-apartheid, non-racial sport. I was visited by the security police and suffered security police harassment and intimidation, arrested for protesting sports tours to South Africa, under investigation for "subversive" activities opposing apartheid, stopped and searched at the airport for protest racial sport. But through it all, remained defiant, strong and bold, just like the leadership of anti-apartheid sport, who taught me to believe in a socially just society.

I was a university student, for several years; attending four universities: two in South Africa and one in England. Throughout my university studies, I still chose anti-apartheid sport.

I attended white-designated universities in South Africa; to do this I had to apply for a permit to study at a white university. The sports union at the white universities were all affiliated to apartheid sport structures which supported the government's apartheid policies. I did not play any sports at university in South Africa, not even at a recreational level. After attaining three degrees in South Africa, the first time I ever played university sport was at university in England. I represented the University of York in the English Universities

table tennis championship where I reached the semi-finals; then I got selected to represent English universities at the British universities championship.

Whilst at university in England, coming out of apartheid South Africa, deprived of so much scholarship and intellectual prowess on sport and society, my world exploded before my very eyes! I was blown away by all the books on sport and how it can transform societies. It was exactly what we needed back home, in South Africa.

I began writing about sport at a time, in the 1980's in South Africa, when there were no women journalists in sports media. I was a university student, not studying sport or journalism or media. I just desperately wanted to write about sport, particularly about how we played anti-apartheid sport. How we played with limited resources and no money in disadvantaged communities; yet we persevered and required admirable standards of play.

My earlier consciousness in sport was primarily around society's discrimination of people, about apartheid's racism, brutalities and prejudice. It was at the advent of our democratic South Africa birthing that my consciousness took on much more about society, particularly gender imbalances in sport.

And so, I started to write much more about women in sport. From the outset, my writing and publishing was focused on black women in sport because we discriminated against and we suffer because of our skin colour.

I began saying: "SA girls and women want to play sport. They are bold, beautiful, talented and penniless. Why do their sport talents go unnoticed in a country which prides itself on gender equality?"

Today, whilst I admire all women performances in sport, I really commend the international success of our black women athletes. For them it is just a little more difficult to achieve their international status, given the disadvantaged socio-economics they still face.

## A Change Agent for Sport: Advocacy and Protest through Writing and Publishing what must be Written

One of my happiest moments in my life was when I had my first sports article published in a newspaper. It was a story about an oppressed woman hockey player in Durban, who was one of South Africa's best women hockey players. I couldn't stop reading the article, glancing at it in the newspaper. I then went on to write much more and have many published articles. Then it was onto opinion articles, giving my opinions about the state of the social positioning of sport in our apartheid, unequal society. I not only liked what I wrote: I also believed in what I wrote. I took a principled decision through my writings, to never support apartheid, never support an unequal society and racial prejudice.

I published my first book, rather daringly and spontaneously. I never thought about money and funding. It was my master's thesis which was about the anti-apartheid sports struggle. I just knew this information which I had researched had to be read.

After that, my confidence catapulted, my believe in a free society was immense and more books followed. I distributed them freely, gave them out and people welcomed them with appreciation. Then came the start of print publications about sport in South Africa and sportswomen in SA. Today, about 25 years later, after the publication of my first print publication, I am still writing and publishing.

I have much freedom in writing. I write what must be written. My publications and books, from the outset, have never supported white privilege and white supremacy. I project and feature mostly black people in sport; their success and struggle stories. The women in sport are especially looked after and given much coverage and publicity with the publication and writing of "South African SportsWoman".

I don't write to be favorited or complimented or liked; I write and publish that what must be written. I write about our fabulous South African people in sport and also about

injustices, inequalities and gender discrimination. I'm not afraid to call out racism, racial privilege, wrongs and limitations of SA's sports network. I do this out of concern for a better and progressive society.

## **Sports Life of Calling out Society's Inequalities**

I've been involved in sport from grassroots to international level. I have played club, regional, school and national sport; have coached, been a sports administrator and official, delegate to meetings and events. All the time, from my teenage sports girl years, I have been a volunteer in sport; never worked in formal employment in sport and never been paid a salary. My seminar and conference talks, my research, my coaching, my administration time, has all been done, because I wanted to be involved and agreed to participate. The only payment was my happiness and the joyful moments created for those I was able to interact with and share information with.

For now I concentrate on my writing and publishing, which I independently own and manage; writing and providing platforms for women in sport, racial inequalities and the previously disadvantaged athletes, as well as challenging the male, status quo entrenched sport media.

I often refer to South Africa's women in sport struggles for recognition to Brazil's phenomenal woman footballer, Marta and her personal struggles for recognition in her native country Brazil. Just like Marta, so too are South Africa's sportswomen involved in a contest and battle for resources and financial and media support. The life story of Marta is the story of millions of disadvantaged girls and women. Marta's world class status in women's football and subsequent accolades have come after an intense struggle within her family, her community and country for a girl's right to participate in her chosen sport.

Whilst I admire the sporting prowess of all sportswomen, there is no better satisfaction for me than when an African or poor, severely disadvantaged woman achieves in world sport, examples like Australian aborigine Cathy Freeman, Mozambique's Maria Mutola, South Africa's Caster Semenya Babalwa, Portia Modise, Ndeleleni and Sindi Gumede, Algeria's Hassiba Boulmerka, Ethiopia's Derartu Tulu.

It's not difficult to figure out why disadvantaged women the world over struggle to participate and survive in sport, given their deep-rooted socio-economic challenges and realities. But it's absolutely awesome when a sportswoman rises from her downtrodden, poverty stricken life and lands on the world stage in whatever sport.

Whilst women the world over struggle for recognition and support, it's just much more difficult and challenging for severely disadvantaged and financially challenged women in sport. Derartu Tulu brought immense pride to Africa with her athletics prowess, so too did Cathy Freeman for Australia and the Aborigines and now its Marta who is letting her feet campaign for a better deal for sportswomen in not only Brazil but throughout the world.

South Africa's women in sport have over the decades been engaged in a struggle and battle for resources and financial and media support. They are on record of saying they get too little media coverage and financial assistance.

I can go on about how oppressed and disadvantaged women are in sport because of their gender. I can go on and say sportswomen are deprived of facilities and infrastructural support. Besides our sports prowess, skills, talent and dedication to our chosen sport we fail to attract the attention of those in charge of corporate power – and we remain victims of those who have the power to change power relations in sport.

We find ourselves in a situation where men are in control of sport, not only in South Africa but around the world. Very few men in sport challenge the deprived position of

women. Most never consider it; several others remember to mention the position of women when it suits them to be politically correct.

However, there are a good number of men who are our partners, genuinely concerned about the disadvantaged position of women in sport. But the fact that the majority of men maintain and entertain a patriarchal society where men are dominant, means that our male partners in sport do have to share the blame that they are responsible for the marginalization of women in sport and deprivation of opportunities.

As black sportswomen, historically deprived and discriminated against, we have a particular burden to carry because of our gender and colour. We get little reward for our toiling efforts as we aim to reach the top of the sports pyramid and we find ourselves battling to hold onto the little that we have been given by the male-dominated sports network. And we also have a responsibility to continually challenge a system which pays lip service to the disadvantaged position of women in sport.

As a woman in sport I do not have the power to change everything the way I would like. But I do have my own power, combined with yours, and every other woman in sport to challenge those in power who do not use that power to effectively improve the position of women. Setting up committees is one thing; but what we must not allow is our continual deprivation and marginalization. Those few who have reached the top echelons of sport, whether as an athlete or administrator or coach, have a responsibility, not to further entrench their personal positions, but to contest the arenas of male domination. Women failing to do this cannot be regarded as acting in the interests of sportswomen.

The days of sitting around, complaining, criticizing and waiting for things to happen should now be a thing of the past. No one is going to make things happen for you. You must spearhead your own leadership, propelled by your own vision and surrounded by the goals and objectives you hope to achieve as women in sport. Battles will be fought, for the ruling elite, if they are benefiting from such, do not like challenges to their power.

Women in sport, the challenges accompanying this gender in sports involvement, is a life time commitment and challenge and should never be let off any agenda of transformation".

Cheryl experienced Apartheid sport and advocated over the past 30 years for non-racial sport in South Africa. Her sustained contributions to the advocacy of gender equality in sport includes books on politics in South African sport, congresses on Gender and Sport, research on women and sport and online publications and blogs. Twenty one years into a democratic South Africa she still advocates for social justice in post-Apartheid sport. She is not afraid to address controversial issues in South African sport and focus a considerable portion of her work on the difficulty of girls and women in sport. Cheryl primarily uses digital media and print media for her sustained social advocacy for gender equality in sport in South Africa to reach the masses and not only selected academics. She has spoken extensively and has spoken, written and published widely on the gender inequalities, issues, challenges, good moments and memories and state of South African sport.

The nine articles advocating for gender equality in South African sport that follows below are published examples of Cheryl Roberts' lens on social advocacy for women and sport and provides insight and context into the gender and social inequalities South Africa's sports girls and women are currently facing in the young democratic South Africa as well as examples of the invaluable work she does to keep gender equality in sport in the forefront. The essays/commentaries/articles/ blogs are reprinted with the permission of Cheryl Roberts as independent publisher.

## 1 **Critical Reflections of Post-Apartheid Sport – through the lens of Cheryl Roberts**

This is an edited version of a collection of my opinions/essays/articles written and published, over the past two years, about South African sport. The articles relate to the social positing of sport in our South Africa society and challenges debates to question the

state of sports in South Africa. Activism, scholarly thought and opinion and grassroots involvement in the sports discourse is severely absent and lacking in and outside sport. We love sport and participate in sport either as players or as consumers and supporters. Talking about the state of our sports network must be ongoing; we must not fear being critical and questioning the ills and deficiencies of our sports system. This collection of articles raises the bar in analysis, debate and questions about the sports discourse. These are my opinions/ I don't expect everyone to agree with them. I write and express my opinions because I'm not a silent participant in sport and neither am I accepting of the state of sport at any given era or time. I write and publish about the social positioning of sport because our South African country is a society advantages for some and under-resourced schools and communities for the majority of South Africans. An unequal and severely unbalanced society must be challenged through writing, opinion debates, activism and constructive dialogue and conversation! Hopefully, my writings and opinions will spearhead many more conversations about the social positing of sport in South Africa.

## 2 **South Africa's Black Sportswomen Struggle to Survive after Retirement**

South Africa's sportswomen struggle to achieve against the grain. Despite challenges encountered because of gender inequalities and discrimination, women in sport have emerged and claimed championship titles and medals. All sportspeople reach retirement date from competitive sport, when they call time and bid farewell to training and competition. It's expected that international sportspeople don't retire into a struggling life, especially after you've achieved for yourself and your country. After having served South African sport and represented our country internationally, several black sportswomen are struggling to survive. It's disheartening and painful to know of international Sports women representatives struggling to survive, after they have retired from competitive sport.

It's always a struggle and challenge for black women to participate in sport. It's a tougher encounter for them to compete internationally, achieve world class performances,

championship titles and medals. South Africa's black and working class sportswomen and women in sport are forever the struggling people, this after having realized their talent, trained daily for events and tournaments.

Amongst some of South Africa's successful sportswomen who are battling to survive after retiring from international sport are Janice Josephs from Retreat, Babalwa Ndleleni from Crossroads, Jo-Anne Solomons from Cloeteville in Stellenbosch. Why should our sportswomen, who have achieved for our country and made us a proud sports nation, have to struggle when they retire? These are women who competed in an era when sponsorship for black women in sport was almost non-existent. They were not paid professionals with lucrative incomes. Ndleleni and Josephs were on SASCO's Operation Excellence Programme (OPEX) which assisted and prepared athletes for elite participation such as world championships, continental events and Olympic Games. Ndleleni got R2 000 [*less than \$200*] and Josephs got R6 000 [*less than \$500*] from OPEX. Solomons received stipends and match bonuses from SFA when Banyana Banyana [*the female national football team*] played internationally.

Josephs was a talented schoolgirl athlete. Her sports talent was noticed throughout her school years as SA schools champion in several athletics disciplines such as the sprints, javelin, and long jump. She developed from the junior internationals to senior international, representing South Africa at several African and world championship. Ndleleni got interested in weightlifting after being introduced to the sport at school in Nyanga, following a talk by the weightlifting federation. She went on to become Western Province and South African champion, won numerous African titles and gold medals and clinched a hard earned bronze medal at the 2008 Commonwealth Games in Australia.

Solomons was a precocious girl footballer and played club and provincial football. Her talent didn't go unnoticed and she was called South Africa's women's national team, played in African championship, friendly internationals and world cup qualifying events. She remains one of Banyana Banyana's prolific goal scorers having scored 49 international

goals. She retired from international football in 2006. Josephs, Ndleleni and Solomons would love to be involved full-time in sport; to be coaching or managing girls and women in sport. Solomons is out of work, staying at home with her pensioner mother and still seeking work. Ndleleni, 35 years old can't find employment in sport, despite having a sports diploma. A mother of a 2 year old, Ndleleni worked in a call centre and now has an admin job but can't survive on her income and provide for her and her child. Josephs retired from competitive athletics, aged 32. Two years ago, she won a silver medal for SA at the African athletics champs in Benin. A few weeks ago, she hit rock bottom in her life and was forced to take cover in a shelter for homeless people in Paarl. She had no income, no money to pay for rent; just a few possessions.

When the statistics are recorded, when the medals are counted and the accolades acknowledged for those who contributed to South Africa's sporting success, the names of Josephs, Ndleleni and Solomons will be amongst those who have achieved. But why, if the sportswomen have achieved and made their country proud, can't they further be involved in sport. In the billions allocated to sport in SA, surely opportunities can be created for our international sportswomen to be kept in sport and help develop our sports girls and mentor our sportswomen.

Admittedly there are some women who are able to work fulltime in sport, but these are just the few who manage to get a foot in and then hold on to their jobs. At the SA Sports Awards why are the women not asked to do award presentations? Why are people from outside sport like musicians and performers paid to do presentations whilst our black sportswomen are ignored?

SA's black working class sportswomen have worked really hard to participate in sport and achieve on the world stage. They have sacrificed personal wealth and income accumulation to develop their talent and win titles, medals and world class rankings. Most importantly, it's because they struggled against the odds and against the grain and showed that black women can achieve in sport, that South Africa's present generation

of girls and women in sport can believe in themselves. It's because of the women before them, that confidence is installed in today's provincial and national representatives. Surely positions of employment can be created within sport for South Africa's retiring sportswomen! They have dedicated their lives to training and achieving for themselves and their country but they are almost destitute in the very country they made proud.

### 3 **Class and Sport -South Africa Must Prioritise Support for Working Class Sports Girls**

*This article was written by Cheryl Roberts after the 2014 African Youth Games which were held in Gaborone, Botswana*

The African Youth Games was held in May 2014 in Gaborone, Botswana where Africa's girls and boys displayed their sports talent, competed with youthful tenacity to claim sought after medal positions and make their respective countries proud. South Africa unleashed a youth team which got the medals for the country to claim top the status and ranking of Africa's no.1 youth sports team. This top position in Africa is expected of South African sport, given its plentiful resources and abundant sports funding, particularly for elite professional men's sport.

Whilst Africa's young sports stars give our continent much to cheer about and hopefully, a future of international champions we can be proud of, it's the talent of African gold medalists and South African sports girls like Kaylynn Kloppers, 16 and Gazelle Magerman, 17 together with many other talented sports girls, which makes me ask: "What future do SA's sports girls have of displaying their sports potential on the world's sports stages". Both Kloppers and Magerman are not only raw, natural sports talent; they are exceptional participants in their sports. At the African Youth Games, they won gold medals in their highly competitive events. Participating in weightlifting, Kloppers won 3 gold medals and Magerman won the girls 400m hurdles race. These sports girls exploded onto the gold medal podium, out of the

uneven starting blocks of their disadvantaged and deprived families, forcing their talent to be recognized, after participating in sport at grassroots and community level.

Similar to the lives of many working class girls in sport, Kloppers and Magerman are from struggling, disadvantaged families and communities, where survival is tough and sport a privilege, yet definitely a positive way out of diverse family and community life. Kloppers comes from working class area, Eerste River, a northern residential area in Cape Town. Magerman is from Darling, a town outside Cape Town.

Over the 20 years of our proud non-racial, democratic country, together with our sporting achievements we also lament South African sport's litany of lost, forgotten and discarded sports talent, especially of black and working class youth in sport. Admittedly, opportunities have been and are created, albeit not enough of them and much more must be done. But sadly, and most times this happens because of neglect and deprivation of assistance and funding from a well-resourced sports paradigm, South Africa's talented youth are not coming through the sports system as their performances and achievements indicate. What will become of these two precocious talents, and all struggling sports girl talent, in a few years' time? Will they be given the support to develop to sport's elite level and compete internationally as seniors? Will their talent be recognised and supported by corporates so they are able to compete as professional women athletes?

South Africa is overflowing with sports talent in working class communities and schools, where youngsters show natural talent at school sports and junior events. With opportunities being created in the non-racial, democratic South Africa, many girls, unlike millions before them, have participated in sport over the past 20 years. However most of these girls have been lost in the system and have disappeared from sport. The teenage and early adult years are crucial in the life of sports girls. It's during the 15-21 years of age, that talented girls participating in competitive sport disappear from competitive sport. Look at the lives of Kaylynn Kloppers and Gazelle Magerman. Kloppers lives with her grandmother, a pensioner who is her adopted guardian.

Magerman was given an opportunity to attend the well-resourced La Rochelle Girls school in Paarl, where she's on a full scholarship where, fees are paid and sports training are taken care of. Kloppers trains in a home garage in her Eerste River community because there is no equipped weightlifting gym provided. Before a working class girl starts to achieve in sport, before they get the prized gold medals at international junior events, it's a struggle to get them to participate in training programmes and competitions. Adversity and scenarios of battling against the odds within the family is common. What happens is that the girl will participate in sport and her talent will be recognized by a teacher or a community coach who will try to assist and encourage them in sport. Ask any community coach what a battle it is to help disadvantaged youngsters. You must ensure they are eating well, attending and performing at school, friends are in good standing and have tracksuits and training shoes and transport fare to come to training'.

#### 4 **Gender Violence and Abuse: Sport can't Remain Silent!**

Girls and women play sport to enjoy the game, not to become another victim or survivor of abuse and hate. Abuse and violence against women and girls is rampant and widespread in South African society. Violence against women in sport and our sports girls is increasing big time, instead of decreasing big time. There have occurred too many deaths of innocent, defenceless sportswomen because of men who want to be in charge of what they term is male turf and the male domain. However much we empathise and sympathise, for those of us who don't live in these spaces where the thugs rule open spaces as their turf, we don't really know what fear the women encounter or face as daily and nightly challenges, because we don't live there.

Most people, and certainly the majority of society, surely don't agree with these senseless murders. Even if they occur outside of the victim's home, in the tavern, in the road, on the sports field, the fact and law is that no man has the right to take out any woman because he doesn't approve of her behaviour, sexual image or identity. And most

of the women victims of hate, which occurs in the form of assault, rape, stabbings and murder, have been attacked and killed outside their family homes.

Sport can no longer remain silent as women's bodies are wrongfully claimed and bludgeoned. Sport can no longer ignore these brutal killings of our sports girls and sportswomen. And no longer should sport respond as if this is a non-sport issue and just another challenge. Women engage in, participate in and consume sport, making up the sports paradigm of players, administrators, spectators.

These vicious, brutal attacks on women in sport and our sportswomen are a result of patriarchy and the arrogant assumption of hetero sexism to assume that all should embrace patriarchy and heterosexuality. It is the assumption by men to believe, in their small minds, they have the "right" to own and control women's bodies. Our shock, anger and disgust are overflowing into the trenches of social justice activism and to those in power! Grassroots sport has had enough of the abuse, attacks and assault crimes committed against our sports girls and sportswomen and we are speaking out.

Admittedly organized sport has seemingly been silent as a voice when women in sport have been abused. But now, our voices are angry and our words are raging. We are saying we have had enough and no more are we remaining silent. We are demanding there must be no more abuse of our sports girls and women (*original article shortened*).

## 5 **Eliminate Gender Inequalities in Sport: Gender Imbalances Inhibit Women's Growth in Sport**

South Africa's sports paradigm is filled with inequalities resulting from unequal distribution and allocation of financial resources, and the harshest of these inequalities affect people's class, social and gender positioning in sport. I use as much opportunity to speak out against the gender imbalances which severely prohibit and impede development of our girls and women as they strive to develop through the sports pyramid.

Over the past 20 years, pressure, activism and gender inequality awareness have raised consciousness, but not enough is being done to ensure that our sportswomen get the best allocations and support, just like our sportsmen. We have just come off another participation in Olympic Paralympics Games. For the average sports consumer, those who don't question gender constructs and imbalances in society, it appears that SA's sportswomen are useless, have no talent, and should not be competing on the international sports stage because they can't win medals. SA's women Olympians and Paralympians have achieved just about all that can be expected of them when they compete among and with the world's best in various disciplines, given the shortcuts and piecemeal handouts with which they have to cope. Those in control of the SA sports network – mostly men – do not consider women's development in sport, prioritising the development of men.

So who do the sportswomen turn to, and to whom do they cry out? In 10 years' time, I don't want to be writing about gender inequalities and pleading for assistance. I want to be celebrating and applauding a sports structure that does not discriminate against girls and women. The time has arrived for us to stop complaining, because we already know gender imbalances exist and acknowledge the stressful situations under which our sportswomen are forced to compete. It is time we refused to accept this deficient terrain. Sports federations tasked with organising and developing girls and women in sport, from club to elite level, often place the blame at the door of corporates which refuse to assist sportswomen, despite women's buying power. Government sports departments, under various ministers and MECs, have also recklessly and negligently treated women in sport, with some support and assistance here and there. Despite this minimal and at times absence of support, our sportswomen continue to believe in their talents and worth, and continue to work hard at training in order to achieve and make SA proud. We should not compare our sportswomen to their Jamaican and US counterparts, other women athletes elsewhere, world-class swimmers and tennis players and achieving world champions and Olympic medallists when we send them out to compete with chains around their legs. Sports such as netball and football must set up national professional leagues for women. High-performance sport must concentrate on women, with exclusive funding for women,

not just on an ad hoc basis – such as a year before the Games – but over a consistent period, if we are to appreciate the talent of our sportswomen.

## 6 **Sportswomen Must Sharpen Their Swords**

Our sportswomen participate in sport in chains, struggling to find their potential and attain world class level with the small amounts of support here and there. And, despite reaching international level, our sportswomen have to continue battling against numerous odds, to perform on the world sports stage. South Africa's women in sport, including elite sportswomen, leaders and administrators and women who participate in sport as consumers watching and supporting sport must stop complaining about the vast gender inequalities which exist in the sports paradigm and galvanise their gender into powerful action because our challenges and lack of support are not gaining any momentum in our interest. Government, business and corporate know the inequalities and imbalances exist, after all, it is the apparatus of government and business, over the decades that has created and, further contributes, to sport's gender inequality. When I say that women must stop complaining, I don't mean they must go quiet. They must sharpen their words and spearhead the challenge to transform the sports paradigm, which sees men having all the advantages, whilst women and girls are rarely supported. Two years after hosting a very successful men's football world cup, which costs our country billions, South Africa's sportswomen should have been accorded much more attention, focus and spotlight, because the men have been getting all the country's support, assistance and attention in the years leading up to the football world For too long women are participating in sport and achieving world class standards, including continental and world titles but are doing so with very little support. And for too long, women are not being taken seriously when they raise the impediments to their participation in sport. It's about time that no more complaining was done, because this is seemingly heard only during the first few days of August (in South Africa the month of August is declared as Women's month) and then is shifted under some table where it's not heard for a long time. Firstly, women must unite and pressurize for infrastructural and financial support. We can't leave the development

and participation of girls and women in sport on the financial agendas of corporate whose employees and representatives have consistently shown that they will "support" sport that reaps returns on the corporates investment, and this means football, cricket, golf and rugby. There are some agendas of activism and women's voices here and there, but women themselves have got to take on this challenge to confront gender imbalances in sport. For too long women have been receiving the crumbs and some handouts here and there.

## 7 **Women's Sport Must Be Supported**

And now we ask, as have done many times before, why must the women continue to struggle on their sports journey? Who is responsible for controlling women's participation in sport and what allocation of resources goes to women in sport. Future success for women in sport can be achieved on massive levels, but it must not be determined only by the opinions and decisions of male decision-makers in sport who decide on an *ad hoc* basis who, when and what to allocate to women's sport. The voices required to give attention to women's sport must be stronger and more challenging, and these voices must come from the women themselves, who must take the reins and give leadership to the organization and development of women in sport. Along the route of a woman in sport are several injustices, repression and inequalities that must be challenged and offloaded, particularly homophobia and the sexualisation of sports girls and sportswomen. Men don't mind having women in sport, so long as the women are there on their terms. For instance, they want the women to play in skirts and dresses, the "dress code" socialization of their gender. The governing body of badminton wants to introduce a law whereby women badminton players play only in skirts, not in shorts. Beach volleyball insisted that women volleyball would play in shorts shorter than shorts, actually in underwear, to make it more attractive. FIFA President, Sepp Blatter wants women footballers to be "more feminine". These are all standards set by men, for the interests of men, so that women's sport is boxed, according to sexism and men's standards. And then, there is also the struggle amongst women themselves of how they see and describe what is "feminine" and heterosexism as being the only accepted sexuality. We know that society's gender inequalities

in society are very much present in sport, and that several conferences, workshops, talk sessions have been held by government, sports federations and gender activists to discuss the positioning of women in sport. Now it's time we move forward, knowing that we don't want our women to be given a raw deal, nor treated as a not so significant entity in sport because much, too much money is spent on men's sport at the cost of the under development of women. Who is going to take up this challenge to radically transform the social positioning of women in sport in a capitalist society, where participation in sport depends largely on a few government handouts here and there, especially if you are black and working class. The challenge is at the door of women themselves, who really cannot, and should not, allow women's sport to be dictated by the discourse of patriarchy and male domination, because when given power, men protect the interests of men and not women and sportswomen will always get the crumbs and handouts on a piece meal basis. Women in sport, the challenges accompanying this gender in sports involvement, is an all year affair, lifelong challenge and should never be let off any agenda of transformation.

## 8 **Time for Government Legislation?**

Much too much money goes into development of men and boys in sport. It's about time that government intervention, particularly via the national portfolio committee on sport, is implemented. It is always the men's interest in sport that is looked after, to date parliament's portfolio committee on sport has not had a hearing into the negatives, grievances and challenges which curtails, impede and serve as obstacles to women's advancement in sport. The question for women in sport is: how much longer are you going to allow your gender, your future and potential to be dictated by corporate and government, when they do not perform for your best interests? There is very much sports talent and potential amongst girls and women, but how are we going to know our sports talent if we don't give them the best support? Just as we discover men's and boys' sports potential, because of the support given, so too, must that support be given to women. But we can't afford, and neither should we keep on waiting on "corporates for sponsorship" or a few government development programmes now and then, here and there. Women have

challenged oppression and they must continue challenging and initiating the positive direction for women's sport to grow. And this action must start now.

Admittedly, despite the glaring inequalities in our sports paradigm, there is no organised voice and activism to challenge the elite and powerful men who control and allocate the money. Somewhere and somehow this voice has to emerge if we are intent on creating and maintaining opportunities for sports girls and sportswomen, especially the black, rural and working class women in sport. Most importantly, we know that gender discrimination and inequalities exist and we have complained and continue to raise our individual voices against them. But we don't want to spend our precious lives complaining. Now it's up to government to deliver in the interest and protection of our sportswomen, and to perhaps introduce legislation against gender inequality in sport.

## 9 **Women Must Challenge Men's Domination and Control of Sport**

As sportswomen, historically deprived and discriminated against, we have a particular burden to carry because of our gender and we get little reward for our efforts as we aim to reach the top of the sports pyramid. South Africa's women in sport have over the decades been engaged in a contest and battle for resources and financial and media support. They are on record of saying they get too little media coverage and financial assistance. It is one thing to create opportunities and bring more girls into sport but it is something else if we fail to assist the many talented girls and women in sport, especially the financially and socially disadvantaged who struggle to eat healthily, let alone play sport and realize their potential. Our sportswomen take whatever comes their way although they may not agree with it. Their love for their chosen sport and desire to achieve their best potential is what drives them against tremendous odds. How many of South Africa's international sportswomen are contracted to a sponsor or offered endorsement packages and how many sportswomen are ever interviewed by the media? Whilst we applaud the efforts of our sportsmen, we ask, how much longer will our sportswomen continue to be ignored and not taken seriously? After all we also buy the cars, airtime, houses, use services of

airlines financial institutions, support supermarkets and several other business houses. Yet these very same businesses continue to ignore sportswomen as non-entities. Make no mistake, government and corporates are well aware of the financial inequalities when it comes to sports spend. They acknowledge vast inequalities exist but very few assist with sponsorship of women in sport programmes and development. I can go on about how oppressed and disadvantaged women are in sport because of their gender. I can go on and say sportswomen are deprived of facilities and infrastructural support. Besides our sports prowess, skills, talent and dedication to our chosen sport we fail to attract the attention of those in charge of corporate power – and we remain victims of those who have the power to change power relations in sport. We find ourselves in a situation where men are in control of sport, not only in South Africa but around the world. Very few men in sport challenge the deprived position of women. Most never consider it; several others remember to mention the position of women when it suits them to be politically correct. However, there are a good number of men who are our partners, genuinely concerned about the position of women in sport. But the fact that men maintain and entertain a patriarchal society where men are dominant means that our male partners in sport do have to share the blame that they are responsible for the marginalization of women in sport and deprivation of opportunities.

Sadly, the men in the most powerful sports positions in South Africa do not have healthy and positive track records when it comes to advancing women in sport, despite having the power to reign in corporates, media and male sports administrators. There appears to be a perception that if one woman sits on a national executive committee, then it is enough. No. It is not enough. Why should we be satisfied with a few hand-outs here and there, and be the perpetual forgotten-about, in South African sport? As sportswomen we find ourselves battling to hold onto the little that we have been given by the male-dominated sports network. As sportswomen we have a responsibility to continually challenge a system which pays lip service to the disadvantaged position of women in sport. Today's sportswoman has an important future to play in the coming decades because we need every human resource, every skill and every woman if we are

going to effectively challenge the patriarchal system and male domination of the South African sports paradigm.

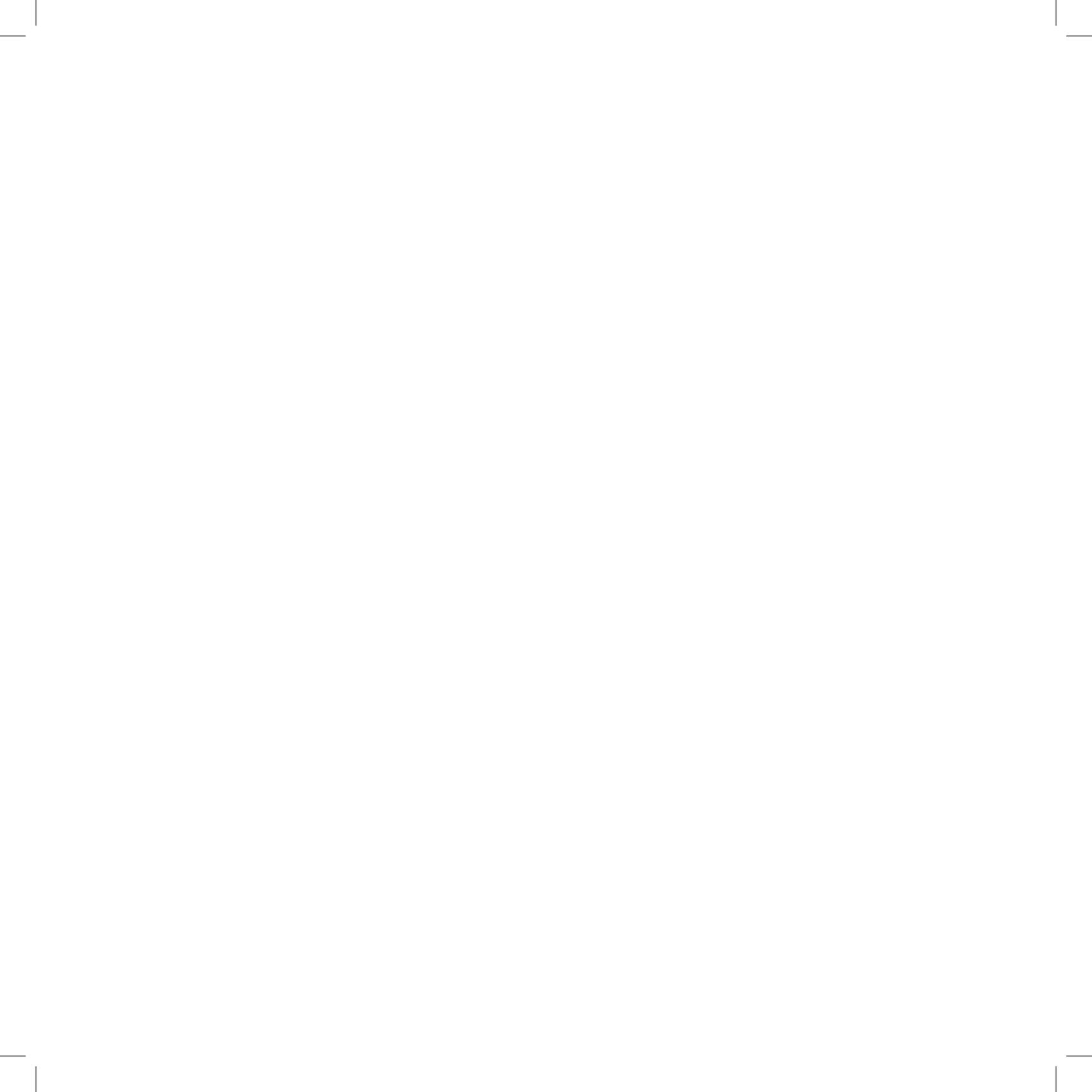
Cheryl Roberts is a prolific sports journalist and her monthly publication "South African SportsWoman" bear witness to her unrelenting advocacy for justice and fairness for women and girls in sport (sportswoman@gmail.com). Readers are invited to access her publications online to evidence the inspirational work of Cheryl Roberts in South African sport.

## **CONCLUSION**

Advocacy for gender equality in sport requires continued bold efforts and sustained focus to shine the light on unfair practices and discrimination. The message must be repeated many times to make an impact on decision makers. Cheryl Roberts' advocacy for women and sport in South Africa displays the inspirational efforts of one inspirational woman who refuses to close her eyes to injustices and inequalities sportswomen have to face continually. Women and sport needs more of her calibre!

# 3

## **FEMALE PHYSICAL EDUCATION PIONEERS AND CATALYSTS IN AFRICA**



# INTRODUCTION

Formal Physical Education on the continent of Africa can be divided into colonial and post-colonial phases. During the colonial phase traditional forms of physical activity and sport were ousted by formal drills and military-like exercises brought to Africa by colonial occupiers of many African countries. The negative influences of this approach is well documented and debated by scholars like Adedeji (1994), Ajisafe (1997), Amusa (1999), Amusa and Toriola (2010), Amusa and Toriola (2012), Bressan (1994), Hardman and Marshall (2001), Van Deventer (2005), Wamukoya (1994), for example, argues that the ever diminishing position and international fragility of the subject is the result of less time allocated to physical education in favour of academic subjects, the perception that physical education can be substituted by extra-curricular sport, politics and insufficient policy on physical education.

The need for a home grown African model for physical education was expressed in 1994 already by Elizabeth Bressan when she stated:

If Physical Education and Sports programmes are to succeed in Africa, they must be developed, designed and nurtured on the African continent. Because of the cultural diversity of the continent it is "impractical" to import models of programmes from overseas. The imported models were designed to serve the specific situations of post-colonial powers. Present conditions in Africa are dissimilar to those of the colonial era. It is therefore unlikely that any African situation will find its equivalent in a western or eastern culture (BRESSAN, 1994 as quoted in AMUSA; TORIOLA, 2010, p. 676).

According to Amusa and Toriola (2010) the only practical road to achieving an African model for physical education is through deliberate efforts of curriculum developers who are committed to change and who has the competence and insight to apply scientific principles of physical education within Africa's context of political, cultural and ethnic realities.

**Doreen Solomons** (South Africa) meets the criteria as set above: a curriculum developer who is committed to advocate the value of physical education and has the experience and competence to translate that into an African model for physical education. The story of her inspirational efforts over decades to uplift physical education, mass gymnastics and dance to the benefit of girls and boys in South Africa is presented below.

### **VIVA LA VIDA AL MAXIMO - (Live life to its fullest)**

**By: Doreen Solomons** (Former Deputy Chief Education Specialists in Life Orientation (WCED) and former Vice-President of the International Association of Physical Education for Girls and Women (IAPESGW).

**This is dedicated to the women who walked this journey with me: Margaret Talbot, Elizabeth Cameron Smith, Darlene Kluka, Alrine Rodgers and the WCMEA team.**

#### **To my dear parents who instilled strong values and skills within me.**

My teaching career started in 1967 in Germiston in Transvaal where I taught a Grade 1 class (5-6 year olds). I taught all the basics of the foundation phase experience to them; to read, write and do maths. I also prepared the learners for Eisteddfods – which was a huge mission to get them groomed from head to toe.

One day of my hockey mates told me about a Physical Education course being presented at a tertiary institution – the only one institution at that time where we could qualify as Physical Education Specialists – in Athlone in Cape Town, 1300 km from where I stayed in Boksburg, a suburb, 15 kilometres away from Johannesburg. I immediately knew that that was what I wanted to do. So, in 1971, after being a Foundation Phase teacher four years, I was off to Hewat Training College to follow a course in Physical Education. In 1972 I went back home and taught Physical Education to all the girls at Germiston Primary school and had an intermediate class for class teaching. I applied at East Rand

High school where I then taught Physical Education to all the girls and History to Grade 9 learners. Six months later, I applied for a post at the Rand College of Education where I lectured Physical Education and Health Education to enthusiastic group of student teachers. In 1973, I requested permission from the Rector to start the first Physical Education Specialist Course at the Rand College of Education in Crown Mines, Johannesburg.

## **Western Cape Education Department**

In 1976, I was appointed as a Physical Education Inspectress for Girls and was transferred to Cape Town to take up this important task. I was the first Inspectress of colour appointed at the office in Wynberg, Cape Town. The criteria for being appointed was that we had to have 10 years of experience in teaching Physical Education at a primary and a secondary school and should have been lecturing at a Teacher's Training College. My experience fitted all the requirements.

After moving lock stock and barrel from Johannesburg to Cape Town, I started as a 28 year-old, from home for the first time under the leadership of Amelia du Toit, a prominent member of IAPESGW.

The duties of the job to which I was appointed included - support to teachers in Physical Education, presenting workshops and giving guidance to teachers. Most teachers clearly lacked in the area of introducing "new" work to their curriculum. They kept on teaching combinations and dances and gymnastics programmes which they were taught and performed years before while they had their training... This was the norm.

In 1977 the Education Department still consisted of several Education departments for Whites, Coloureds, Indians, Blacks, etc. Each Department had its own set of Curriculum Planners, Directors and Curriculum Advisers in Physical Education. We met often to listen to presentations about Physical Education Sport and Science. We received the

Physical Education Curriculum from the National Education Department and then Mrs Amelia du Toit and her “Coloured group” of Curriculum advisers had to work through the curriculum so that all teachers could understand the concepts and skills to develop throughout South Africa.



**Left** – Curriculum Advisers in 1981 with students specialising in Physical Education (do check the “younger me” in the brown dress).

**Right** – Curriculum Advisers in Life Orientation in 2007 at the end of a Life Orientation mini-conference – the year that I “retired” from the Education Department.

### **My registration with the International Association for Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW)**

In 1977 – the Conference of the International Association for Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW) was held at the Nico Malan theatre in Cape Town, South Africa. This was my first exposure to this massive international body. I was tasked to arrange and allocate the buses for the different groups who visited the different educational institutions on a particular day.

After attending this Conference, I planned attending these conferences at own cost and inviting teachers, lecturers, sport coaches and colleagues to also attend the conferences and pre-conferences in Rio de Janeiro, Argentina, Melbourne(Australia), Holland, England, Finland, Alexandria (Egypt), Edmonton University in Canada and the back again in South Africa in 2009 – where I was tasked to organise the conference. Mali was the only Conference we did not or could not attend.

During the IAPESGW Congress which was held in 1977, practical sessions in National Dance were presented by Audrey Bambra, who attended the Congress. Congress participants went through the dance paces with much zeal and enthusiasm. Audrey Bambra stayed in South Africa for another week. A follow-up workshop was arranged and held in collaboration with Amelia du Toit and two dance lecturers from the University of Cape Town Dance School -Jasmine Honoray and Mary Suckling – back then. They offered us the necessary skills and awoke in us a passion for national dancing. This resulted in us being entered for the Imperial Society of Teachers of dancing (ISTD) examinations on an annual basis.

Here we met Robert Harold, June Rycroft, Helen Wingrave and other senior examiners from the Head Office of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (based in London) when we entered for the ISTD dance examinations from 1978 – 1982.

The teachers in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town felt “left out” of these classes as it was not easy to get to the Cape Town Ballet School which was situated in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town and classes were presented on a Tuesday evening.

After consulting with my fellow colleagues– all Subject Advisers in Physical Education - Dulcie Davids, Spasie Adams, Brenda Prince and Marion Rhode – we started the dance group with more than 50 teachers attending the national dance classes in the Northern Suburbs. We prepared and coached teachers and entered them for the national dance examinations. This section was part of the original curriculum for Physical Education,

which also included Games, Rhythmic movement and Creative dances. Entering teachers for these examinations ignited a new love for movement. Participation in and implementing this section became part of the Physical Education programme. This was a strategy to get teachers to teach movement in their Physical Education Programme. It was a successful strategy as the basic skills of movement were shared with the teachers.

Other teachers in distant rural areas heard about this movement, and it obviously spread like wild fire – so we started presenting National Dance classes in Paarl (in the Boland) – where Dulcie Davids worked; in Atlantis and Malmesbury (along the West Coast) where Spasie Adams worked and then also across Sir Lowry’s Pass to Grabouw for teachers in that vicinity where I worked. We taught teachers to participate, upskill and challenge themselves and entered them for the ISTD examinations. These teachers could implement all the skills they obtained during their Physical Education lessons. There was tremendous interest in this movement. At one stage we had teachers travelling from Kimberley (in the Northern Cape, where Marinda Dordley was working) and Port Elizabeth (in the Eastern Cape) to Cape Town to complete their International National Dance examinations.

Apart from my daily job to guide, support, present workshops and assist teachers to teach the Physical Education syllabus, I started presenting National Dance classes since 1982 in Mitchells Plain, Grassy Park, Somerset West and also in Bellville. Most of the teachers joined on a Saturday and travelled from as far as Stellenbosch, Gordon’s Bay, Worcester, Kuilsriver, Kraaifontein, Athlone, Paarl and the rest of the Cape Peninsula. Between 1982 and 1991, I entered teachers annually for examinations through the ISTD dance syllabus. It was indeed an experience. I offered these classes free of charge as they had to pay a pretty penny for the International dance examinations. It really took off and we presented classes in the evenings and over weekends. I worked with teachers who had former ballet training and teachers who had no experience of dance whatsoever, but took on the challenges – as I took them through their paces and fostered the love for national dance.

I also continued upskilling myself by attending my own classes with Veronica Esterhuizen (a Teacher in Ballet and National Dance) and in 1988 the two of us were off to London. She completed her Fellowship examination and I did my Licentiate dance examination.

The week before this examination, I attended a workshop in dance choreography, music improvisation and contemporary dance at the Laban Centre of the University of London with one of my former colleagues, Spasie Adams – also a dedicated IAPESGW member. The week after this course, I then completed the Licentiate Dance Examination at the ISTD headquarters with Helen Rees, the chief examiner. What an extremely tough examination where four students from the ballet section of the ISTD were chosen and came in on the Saturday morning so that I could teach them the dances which I have choreographed from two countries – of contrasting dance styles (I chose Italian and Czechoslovakian dance styles) and thereafter had to critique my lessons and then had to demonstrate the dance style of the Elementary Dance examination. I funded this venture myself.

The Sunday after this tough examination I attended the service at the Central Methodist Church in Westminster. I promised by Lord that if I pass, I would get to the top of St Paul's Cathedral to say thanks! Not sure who and what ignited this challenging thought, but the Monday morning I had to keep that promise. I will never forget those steps!

Back in South Africa, the classes still went on every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. The Eisteddfod movement started after one of my old friends invited me to a Peninsula Eisteddfod in Wynberg, and I was immediately drawn to this process. If teachers attended workshops, teach the sequences to the children, of the dances included in the curriculum, we can have them enter for an Eisteddfod. This was to further enhance the teachers love for movement and to showcase their work [...] and this movement started.

Schools in the Mitchell's Plain area where I worked started participating in the National dance Eisteddfods. I knew that this process assisted teachers to engage in a

higher level of teaching and challenged learners to better execution which was evident when I visited them for school inspection in Physical Education.

Two years after I attended the IAPESGW congress in Finland, I received a phone call from Margaret Talbot inviting me to be a co-opted member of the IAPESGW executive. I was amazed, enthralled, surprised and indeed felt honoured to have been nominated to such a prestigious Association. I also contacted some of the South African members to inform them and to get a feeling of what they thought about this [...]

I was then invited to attend meetings, share with the IAPESGW family information regarding the projects that we were busy with in schools. There was also an opportunity to have a meeting with the executive of IAPESGW here in South Africa. It was indeed an opportunity which broadened my horizon from the Western Cape and South African scene to a global view of physical education, sport and health. What an experience, what a chance to meet expertise from across the world and the broader African continent.

I am a member of IAPESGW and in 1997 I was elected as vice-president of this International Association in Alexandria. The exposure to the IAPESGW executive afforded me several educational opportunities; the one was when Prof Gudrun Pfister wanted to know how she could assist in introducing a fitness programme to girls in the area where I was working. This is how two ladies from the German Gymnastics federation were invited to South Africa to start the Rope Skipping project. We worked in collaboration with school psychologists, the University of the Western Cape and 10 selected schools in the Western Cape to perform a pre-test, intervention programme and thereafter a post test in testing the relevance of the impact of the introduction of active movement to Girls in High schools. The pre-test had much low incidences as girls were unfit and lacked the urge to participate in practical activities.

In 1999 I was invited to the ICCSPE conference in Germany to share the Good Practices in Physical Education within the context of the school curriculum in South Africa.

It was on platforms like these that I realised how different aspects of Physical Education were presented – from research into Physical Education practice, to institutions visiting schools during practice teaching and making their deductions, to curriculum advisers who work in the schools, present workshops and do follow up visits on a regular basis.

In 2005, at the IAPESGW conference in Edmonton in Canada, I did a presentation of the programme that was started in 1977 and how it developed until 2007. I presented a National Dance programme with 18 teachers and an ex-colleague of mine, Brenda Prince who participated. These teachers worked extremely well (they were from very remote areas in the Western Cape to the more central areas of Cape Town). With this presentation I alluded to programmes that we offered teachers who in turn taught the learners in their classes. We received the Audrey Bamba award for the best Dance programme (and for the work being done among learners in the Western Cape). What an honour it was, what a privilege to commemorate the life of this great dame who fostered the love for national dance within me in South Africa.



The teacher group whom I've trained received the Audrey Bamba Award for the best Dance presentation performed in 2005 at the IAPESGW conference held at Edmonton University in Canada. With our group is Professor Margaret Talbot.

## Organising the 16<sup>th</sup> International IAPESGW Congress in South Africa (2009)



**Left** – Brenda Prince, Darlene Kluka, Doreen Solomons and Margaret Talbot at Moyo Restaurant in Stellenbosch busy planning the 2009 Congress.

**Right** – Margaret Talbot sporting some “African face painting” at the restaurant.

Organising the 16<sup>th</sup> IAPESGW world congress was a mammoth task. In 2007, I arranged a meeting with Professor Margaret Talbot and the heads of the Education Department and the Department of Sport in the Western Cape to set the scene for this congress. Meetings were held with several role players as well as from the University of Stellenbosch. After Margaret’s term as president of IAPESGW ended, I was assisted by Prof Darlene Kluka, my mentor, who took me by the hand and guided me through the whole process. What a phenomenal lady, inspiring the same trust in me and with her vast knowledge taught me various skills in overcoming adversity and trusting myself even more. I also had Professor Anneliese Goslin of the Pretoria University on whom I could depend and lean on for assistance and guidance. We planned and worked through each step and had a successful congress in South Africa. With the assistance of the team of the

Western Cape Movement Education Association and Dr Elmarie Terblanche and the staff at the University of Stellenbosch Sports Science Department, Professor Liz Bressan, Dr Kallie van Deventer and Dr Edna Rooth, we worked hard to make this congress a success.

The machinery behind this planning was the group of teachers I've been working with for a number of years. We had to get a uniform in which they could easily be recognised. The colour needed to be in line with the colour of IAPESGW. So, we got them the purple tops, and hence their name as "purple turtles" remained. In her last letter from Margaret to me last year, she sent her best regards to the "purple turtles"!



**16 IAPESGW WORLD CONGRESS** 

**16 - 19 JULY, 2009**

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**Left** – Executive of IAPESGW in Stellenbosch at the 16th IAPESGW World Congress, 2009.



**Right** – Executive of IAPESGW in Atlanta at a Phenomenal Women's Conference in 2007.

## Piloting “Be a Champion in Life” with schools in South Africa

The Foundation of Olympic and Sport Education (FOSE) requested that we pilot a resource titled “Be a Champion in Life” with the steering committee as Margaret Talbot, John Andrews, Deanna Binder and Ian Jobling. Preparatory chapters were sent to schools in five countries to revise the chapters and to see how relevant these are to the curriculum and to then also give input with regard to the content of this valuable resource. South Africa was one of these countries. I chose representatives from among teachers, sport coaches and my colleagues in the Physical Education component to edit these chapters and then give their input to this document. After reviewing the document and giving input, we were requested to pilot this document with schools in the Province.

I then applied to the head of the Western Cape Education Department for permission to pilot this valuable document with 5 representative schools in the Western Cape. I chose schools from all the levels in Khayelitsha, Mitchell's Plain, Muizenberg and Parow. It was an opportune time when Life Orientation was introduced at our schools as a school subject – merging former subjects such as Health Education, Social Development, Human

Rights, Career Education, Life Skills and Physical Education within this Learning Area, as it was then referred to, now known as a subject. I issued each school a "spool" (no laptops, iPhones or ipads were around at the time) [...] so that the school could take photographs of lessons which they have implemented and presented. With the assistance of the Media Centre of the Western Cape Education department, 5 huge collages of these lessons were made and I took them to a presentation of the implementation of this book at Mount Olympus in Greece. The other countries piloting were: Brazil, China, England, and Greece. The purpose of the Classroom Trials was to investigate the way that teachers and learners from different cultural contexts responded to the activities in an international teacher's handbook titled "Be A Champion in Life", produced by the Foundation of Olympic and Sport education (FOSE). In general, the teachers found this experience very rewarding and could I deduce that the teachers in South Africa were on par with the rest of the world as far as presenting the content of the Life Orientation curriculum was concerned. We are the only country that offered this combination of subjects within one learning area (subject). The content of life skills, health education, physical education, human rights were embedded and further unpacked with colourful pictures, relevant activities and projects – a valuable resource for any teacher in primary and high schools.

The implementation of "Be a champion in Life" was a great adventure and a lifelong learning experience for both teachers and the learners in this project. We were invited to be facilitators in introducing this resource to other countries attending this project. A great pity that this book was not further developed and sent to schools as this is a valuable resource.

## My experience with the South African Gymnastics Federation (SAGF)



**Left** – Doreen Solomons, Annetjie van der Walt and Elizabeth Cameron-Smith, the CEO of South African Gymnastics Federation.



**Right** – The LOC of the International FIG Gymn Fest 2013.

In 1991 Elizabeth Cameron Smith and Suzie Kirk introduced us to the Gymnastics Leadership course-which introduced teachers to basic skills training of Gymnastics -artistic, rhythmic, schools programme, and sequences which Suzie Kirk choreographed for primary and high schools. We included this as it enhanced the skill and refinement of teachers who wanted to teach all the disciplines of Gymnastics to their learners within their school programme. We were challenged by the Sports Union who thought that we were taking over the schools programmes – but we were adamant that we were introducing teachers to the skills of the Physical Education programmes. I was even summoned to a meeting to explain to them what we were doing – an all-male gathering who insisted that we were duplicating what they were doing. I had to explain that what we were doing was to enhance the Physical Education Curriculum and afforded teachers opportunities to excel.

In 1992 with the introduction of the USSASA programmes – I represented South African Gymnastics Federation (SAGF) at this meeting and was elected as chairperson of

the Gymnastics discipline. I served on this board developing the Gymnastics Programme and prepared videos and programmes with the assistance of Nazeema Ramjam and Lisle Lombard – who presented the practical workshops. Courses were presented throughout South Africa – from Durban, Port Elizabeth, Uppington, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and the rest of the Western Cape. We also started entering teachers for coaching courses, judges' courses and were they enthusiastic to participate in all these skilled programmes.

I served on the executive of SAGF for 10 years working on the Schools programme and representing SAGF on the Women in Sport Forum on a regional and national level.

Elizabeth Cameron Smith was instrumental in introducing me to the International forum for Gymnastics and so I was also invited to a General Gymnastics course in Tokyo in 2001. I was also the South African Team Manager to the Gymnaestradas in Germany (1995) and Portugal (2003).

I also had the privilege to serve as the team manager of the South African Gymnastics team at the All Africa Games which was held in Johannesburg in 1998. What an experience to have rubbed shoulders with the best in Artistic Gymnastics and Rhythmic Gymnastics in Africa. What a wonderful experience to have worked with the general managers, sport doctors, psychologists, news teams and television presenters.

SAGF afforded me opportunities to develop the Women in Sport on all levels, such as the assertiveness workshops throughout South Africa – in collaboration with PSYGRO and Lydia Vosloo (a clinical psychologist) where women on all levels were exposed to assertive behaviour patterns. This is another passion of mine as my majors are Psychology and Educational Psychology.

## **Presenting a Programme on Robben Island**

In 1996 the head of SAGF requested me to prepare 50 children for the official opening of the declaration of Robben Island as a World heritage site. The reason was that when they asked the former inmates – Nelson Mandela included – what they missed most when they were incarcerated on Robben Island they unanimously replied “the voices of children” [...]

I had to organise 50 children and their teachers – representative of the South African nation and let them present a programme of dance, gymnastics, and rhythmic gymnastics at the entrance of the Museum at Robben Island on the 24 September 1996. Fifty girls and their teachers travelled to Robben Island on the 23rd of September 1996, slept over on the island and presented our programme the next day.

## **Our First Gymnaestrada**

In 1993, I got the lecturers and Curriculum Advisers together and suggested to them that we present a platform for Physical Education and present all levels of movement to a bigger crowd. At the same time one of the Teacher Unions barred all Curriculum Advisers from visiting any school. We were called to head office and advised not to go to classrooms. I mentioned the fact that I was working at schools on a programme and that I was allowed there. Not believing me, I was asked to set up a meeting with the teachers. When the teachers met the curriculum planners, they explained that we were working on a programme that will enhance movement programmes at their schools and my classroom visits continued.

All the role players got together and collaboratively we put a programme together of general gymnastics which included, group gymnastics for primary and secondary schools, rhythmic movement, mother and child activities, acrobatics, Community centres combinations, special gymnastics where we had special schools from Astra and Eros, and

we even had senior citizens group participating. We then compiled a little resource which contained explanations of all the movements as well as a cassette with all the music on it.

For the first time we worked with Gymnastics specialists who worked at the Community centres for quite a long time, all interested schools, special schools and artistic clubs and they were included in the programme.

The evening of the Gymnaestrada which was presented at the Athletics Track in Bellville, the announcer who was a principal at one of our schools, informed me that he was not available as he was in Kimberley. 4 000 participants were ready to go through their paces. I then coerced a good friend of mine, Alrine Rodgers, to anchor the event! This was her debut. My best bet was that she as an English Curriculum Adviser could manage the programme, although at short notice. She agreed on one condition, that we would alternate the order of announcements. While we were in the media box the person responsible for the two-way radios informed me that he could not get the proposed 30 that he promised. He could only get 22. I needed 9 more as I had to communicate with a whole field of coordinators. I managed to get the 9, but then had to sit with two way radios, on two different wave lengths [...] and the poor announcer had to go solo [...] Since then she has been announcing at the major SAGF Gymnastics Competitions, Rhythmic Gymnastics Competitions, at several Department of Sport and Cape Town Community Centre Sports Awards, was the announcer at the South African Evening in Guttenberg, Sweden and recently announced at the 2nd Gymn Fest arranged by FIG (International Gymnastics Federation) at the Cape Town International Conference Centre (CTICC).

## **Western Cape Movement Education Association**

The Western Cape Movement Education Association started when we merged the dance and the Gymnastics programmes. A broader base for teachers to excel and develop in training and refining movement education – as Physical Education was referred to.



Members of the Western Cape Movement Education Association (WCMEA)

National Dance continued [...] Teachers were invited to attend National dance workshops. Interested Schools attended this programme on an extra-curricular basis. We also obtained permission from the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) in London to make use of some of the dances in their syllabus. There is a group of focused ladies that I trained and who obtained their Associate and Advanced examinations through the ISTD. They are choreographing their own dances and are responsible for training the teachers on the WCMEA programmes. These ladies to whom I've "passed the baton" are doing great work and am I very proud of them. They are still enthusiastic and eager to be part of this association.

There is another group of ladies referred to as coordinators who showed a keen interest in organising workshops and eisteddfods and are strategically placed in the areas which we have identified. Over the past 33 years these ladies organised this programme without any remuneration. Their passion, love and commitment kept the programme alive. I thank them.

This Association afforded opportunities to teachers and learners to participate in major opening events, such as: World Hockey Cup (Hartleyvale) where I used the Gymnaestrada programmes; Opening ceremony of the Rugby World cup where schools participated in the opening sequence; The development of the advertisement for the original voters' education programme (our first democratic election) where I had to organise 60 girls from the schools where I was working, with 6 teachers and who were taken to Swellendam so that the film crew could shoot across the fields and mountain ranges in the Swellendam area; at the hanger at the airport; at the waterfront and at Swartklip in Cape Town, South Africa.



**Left** – Children performing a traditional “Riel” dance in Tulbagh.

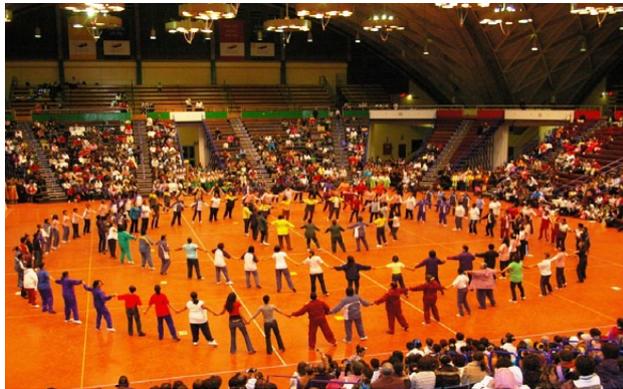
**Middle** – Grade 1 pupils performing the Maypole dance in Mitchell's Plain.

**Right** – Grade 6 girls performing Aricuil – a dance from Romania at the annual Dance Festival held in the Good Hope Centre in Cape Town, South Africa.

The WCMEA has been presenting workshops and eisteddfods since 1982 and is still going strong. Some of the learners who have been part of this programme are professional dancers – one of them is performing as a dancer in major South African productions, some of them are assisting teachers as coaches in preparing learners for eisteddfods and other programmes. Some of them are following courses in different dance and drama programmes. It is so pleasing to observe – while adjudicating – that some learners are from very remote and poor parts of the Peninsula, some of them even dancing without shoes. When adjudicating we share with teachers that no special marks are allocated for the dress of these learners, but rather for performance, musicality, presentation and enjoyment.

Our first Dance Festival was in the Good Hope Centre in Cape Town where 3 000 children and 300 teachers performed. I requested permission from the Department of Education to allow these learners to meet at the Good Hope Centre at 09:00 and then we went through the choreography with the assistance of the WCMEA coordinators and trainers and also took the teachers through their paces.

There are still schools participating in this programme – after all these years – mostly from the rural areas. The schools still fund their own programme and does WCMEA function without any sponsorship.



**Left and Right** – Opportunities for teachers to also participate at the Good Hope Centre in Cape Town and right performing at a Gymnaestrada in Durban ...and they loved it!!!



**Above** – This group of ladies [...] and one gentleman entered for the recent Gymn Fest held at the Cape Town International Conference Centre. “Great dancers are not great because of their technique; they are great because of their passion”. The title of the dance which they performed: “Viva la Vida al Maximo”.

## Awards

The following awards were presented to me from 1993 until 2009:

- 1993 – SAGF – Development Officer of the Year – National Sports Council – Sports Development Officer of the Year (Western Cape).
- 1998 – Western Province Gymnastics Association: Women in Sport.
- 1998 – National Shoprite/Checkers Runner up for: Women of the Year – Category: Sport.
- 1999 – NSC – Sport Achiever of the Year: Woman in Sport (Western Cape).
- 2007 – Runners up (WCMEA team) at Western Cape Premiers awards for excellence within the school curriculum.
- 2009 – Life Time Achiever award – for contribution to Physical Education and Life Orientation – IAPESGW.

## **Margaret Talbott**

My gratitude goes to the memory of Margaret Talbot for affording me opportunities to be the best that I could and still can be. I've spent many hours under her tutorship, guidance and skill. The experiences that I have had in presentations on various forums, congresses at Leeds University, Germany, Greece, Alexandria, Canada, gave me a sense of confidence and exposure to the work being done in Education to enhance Physical Education and Dance in our schools in the Western Cape and South Africa. Margaret Talbot taught me many things [...] above all to believe in yourself, your skills, to share expertise and to encourage those that you are working with and allow them to excel to the best of their abilities. A great dame, a woman of strength. I salute her.

## **Where am I now?**

I have down-scaled and am busy at the Bellville South Methodist Church where I am a circuit steward; teach and leading enthusiastic members of our church in Spiritual (Christian) dance – transferring dance skills and working in collaboration with Barbara Bain – an excellent Christian dance tutor. I am also the coordinator of the church choir and the praise and worship groups, and currently serving on three District Committees in the Western Cape ranging from Healthy living, an education forum that looks at funding students to planning educational programmes to the members of the Methodist church.



**Above** – The group of enthusiastic Wesleyan Christian Dance group from the Bellville South Methodist Church with whom I am working - going through their paces at two different Christian dance festivals in Cape Town.

I am currently busy with a part-time Quality Assurance programme of the Education Department and enjoy still visiting schools, but this time assessing all levels of school management.

For the first time I am coordinating a programme to present a mass display for Early Childhood Development (4-6 year olds) with teachers and learners and am looking forward to this “new” challenge with these little ones!

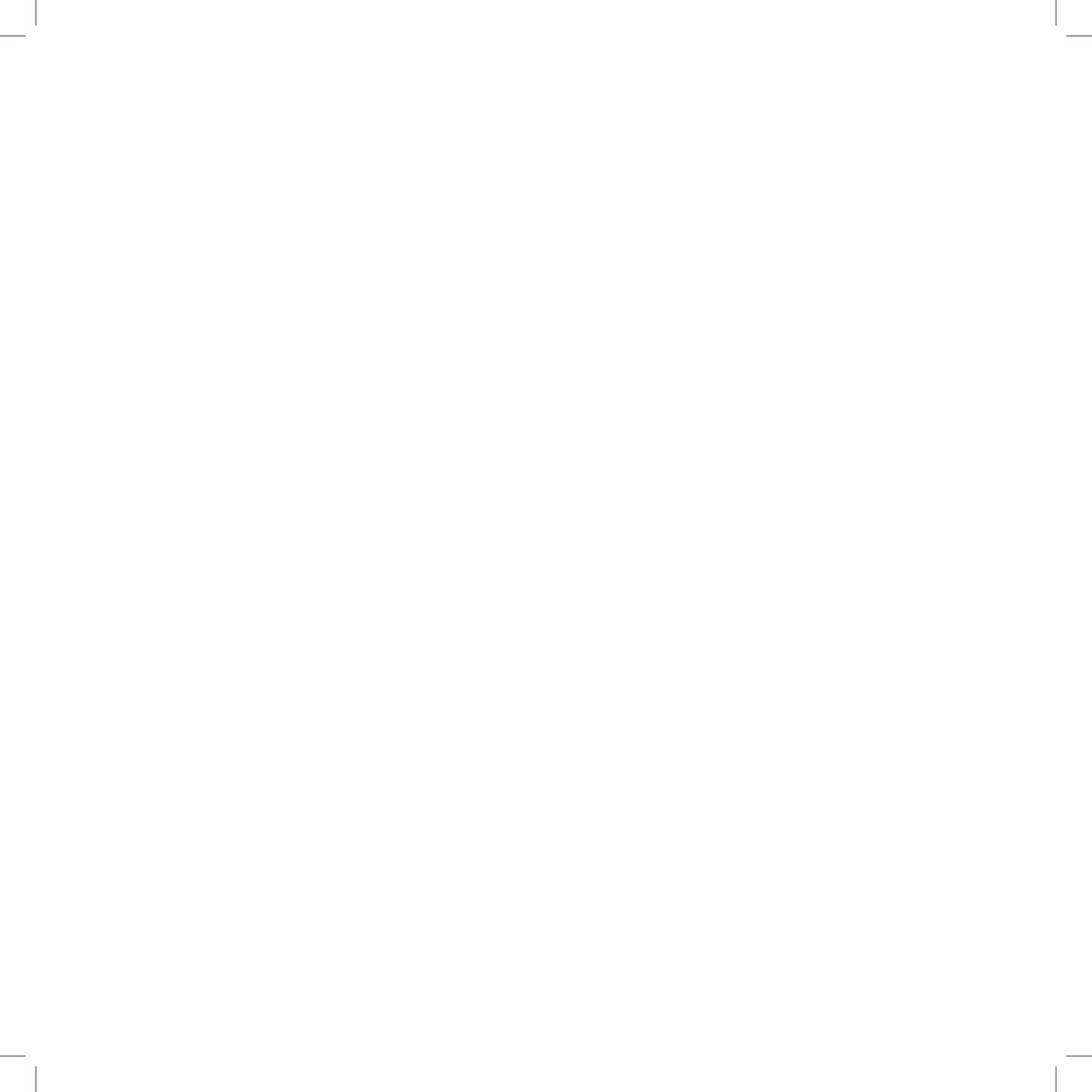
I am thankful to all with whom I had encounters (positive or negative) on my journey in developing learners, students, teachers, tutors, colleagues and lecturers. These are opportunities that I grabbed and developed to the best of my abilities. At the end of it all, I became stronger and wiser and more skilful in giving our children opportunities to excel to the best of their abilities.

## CONCLUSION

Physical education has gone astray in the formal education systems of Africa. One can argue that a significant contributing factor to this situation is the lack of an indigenous African model for physical education. Doreen Solomons's life-long endeavours and involvement in formal physical education, mass gymnastics and dance demonstrates passion, commitment and persistence to unlock the power of physical activity for girls and women on the southern tip of the African continent.

**4**

**FEMALE ELITE  
ATHLETES AND  
ROLE MODELS  
IN AFRICA**



# INTRODUCTION

Female involvement in sport in Africa always seemed to be less reported on and less visible than their male counterparts. An overview of female Olympic and Paralympic gold medallists from the continent of Africa does, however, indicate that as early as 1952, women from Africa recorded impressive achievements at the Summer Games. Nauright (2013) in his article *African Women and sport: The state of play* states that although Africa certainly has arrived on the global sporting map, the names and achievements of female athletes have not yet become household words on the same scale as the male athletes. He attributes that to embodied gender practices in Africa, in particularly in urban Africa where western culture started to influence African social and cultural way of life by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nauright (2013) also notes that the issues of sexuality and homophobia present significant challenges to the progress of women's sport in Africa, as parents may resist allowing girls to take part in sport development programmes.

## Female African Gold Medal Olympians

Female athletes from Africa took part in the Summer Olympic Games since 1952 when South Africans Esther Brand and Joan Harrison won gold medals. In the early years of Olympic involvement, white women from South Africa and Zimbabwe dominated because their countries had a long history of involvement with modern western sport. From 1960 to 1992, South African female athletes were excluded from international sport due to the South African political system of apartheid. Since the re-admittance of South Africa to the international Olympic family, white female athletes like Penelope Heyns, Elana Meyer and Natalie du Toit achieved international success at the Olympic Games. A remarkable rise of black female sportswomen from Africa is notable since the 1992 Olympic Games. The achievements of female long distance runners from East Africa (Algeria, Ethiopia and Kenya) are well known. The phenomenal sustained performances

of **Derartu Tulu**, **Meseret Defar** and **Tirunesh Dibaba** from **Ethiopia**, and **Penelope Heyns** (**South Africa**) as well as ground breaking achievements of Muslim athlete **Nawal El Moutawakel** (**Morocco**) and their inspirational stories need to be shared with the world. Table 2 below presents an overview of all the female Summer Olympic gold medals from Africa. Female athletes from Africa have never had gold medal success at the Winter Olympic Games.

**Table 2** – Africa's Female Gold Medalists (Summer Olympics)

OLYMPIC GAMES	FEMALE GOLD MEDAL OLYMPIAN	AFRICAN COUNTRY	SPORT EVENT
Helsinki 1952	Esther Brand	South Africa	Athletics Women's High Jump
	Joan Harrison	South Africa	100m Women's backstroke, Swimming
Montreal, 1976		Tunisia	Swimming
Moscow 1980	Zimbabwe Women's Field Hockey Team	Zimbabwe	Women's Field Hockey
Los Angeles, 1984	Nawal El Moutawakel	Morocco	Athletics Women's 400m hurdles
Barcelona 1992	Hassiba Boulmerka	Algeria	Athletics Women's 1500m
	Derartu Tulu	Ethiopia	Athletics Women's 10 000m
Atlanta 1996	Derartu Tulu	Ethiopia	Athletics Women's 5000m
	Chioma Ajunwa	Nigeria	Athletics Women's long Jump
	Penelope Heyns	South Africa	Swimming Women's 100m and 200m breaststroke
	Fatuma Roba	Ethiopia	Athletics Women's Marathon
	Chioma Ajunwa	Nigeria	Athletics Women's Long Jump

Continued

Continuation

OLYMPIC GAMES	FEMALE GOLD MEDAL OLYMPIAN	AFRICAN COUNTRY	SPORT EVENT
Sydney, 2000	Nouria Merah-Benida	Algeria	Athletics Women's 1500m
	Maria de Lurdes Mutola	Mozambique	Athletics Women's 800m
	Derartu Tulu	Ethiopia	Athletics Women's 10000m
Athens 2004	Francois Mbango Etone	Cameroon	Athletics Women's Triple Jump
	Meseret Defar	Ethiopia	Athletics Women's 5000m
Beijing 2008	Tirunesh Dibaba Kenene	Ethiopia	Athletics Women's 5000m and 10 000m
	Francoise Mbango Etone	Cameroon	Athletics Women's triple Jump
	Pamela Jilimo	Kenya	Athletics Women's 800m
	Nancy Jebet Langat	Kenya	Athletics Women's 1500m
	Kristy Coventry	Zimbabwe	Swimming Women's 200m Backstroke
London 2012	Meseret Defar Tola	Ethiopia	Athletics Women's 5000m
	Tirunesh Dibaba Kenene	Ethiopia	Athletics Women's 10000m
	Tiki Gelana	Ethiopia	Athletics Women's Marathon

## **Derartu Tulu (Ethiopia) – The first Black African female to win a gold Olympic medal**

Derartu Tulu was the first black African athlete to win a gold medal at the Summer Olympic Games held in 1992 in Barcelona. Derartu was born in 1969 in the village of Bokoji in the Arsi region of central Ethiopia as a seventh child in a family of 10 children. As a member

of the Oromo ethnic group, Derartu Tulu grew up tending cattle in the Arsi highlands of Ethiopia. In elementary school, Derartu excelled in horse riding competitions. She did not realize that she was an unusually fast runner until she was 16 years old. Derartu's first significant win came in a 400 meter race in her school where she out-ran the school's start male athlete. That along with a win in 800 meters race in her district convincingly put Derartu in a path of a successful career in athletics. In 1988, Derartu represented the region of Arsi and competed in a national 1500 meters race where she won a bronze medal.

When she was 17, Derartu was hired by the Ethiopian Police Force. She became a runner in the police club, but Tulu's dream was to join the world runners. In 1989, she competed in her first international race of 6 km cross-country in Norway but came in at the twenty third place. In a year's time, though, she competed in the same race and won the Gold Medal. Derartu won international recognition and success in the 90's. The 23 year old Derartu Tulu rose to fame and Olympics history, when she convincingly won the women's 10000 meters race in the Barcelona Olympics in 1992 beating Elana Meyer from South Africa. Just before the start of the last lap, Tulu pushed past Meyer and darted into the lead and went on to win by 30 metres. She waited for Meyer at the finish line, and then Tulu, the first black African woman to earn an Olympic medal, and Meyer, a white South African, set off hand in hand for a victory lap that symbolized hope for a new Africa. Derartu's win in the 10,000 meter race in the Barcelona Olympics goes down in the History Books as the first gold-medal win ever by an African woman. The scene of this 23 year old Ethiopian young lady winning this race and then draping herself with the national tri-colour and doing a lap of honour with white South African runner Elana Meyer symbolically signalled the end of apartheid on the athletics track and made her an icon of the Olympic Games. Tulu returned to the Olympic in 1996, but finished a disappointing fourth. However, her running career was far from over. At the 2000 Sydney Games, Tulu again entered the 10,000m. Regaining her form of eight years earlier, she took the lead at the bell signalling the final lap and sprinted ahead to a clear victory over teammate Gete Wami. Tulu became the first woman to win two gold medals in Olympic distance races. At the Athens Olympic Games in 2004, she won the bronze medal in the 10,000m

(gold medallist was China's Huina Xing, silver medallist, Derartu's compatriot Ejegayehu Dibaba) (Sourced from International Olympic Committee).

She had never lost a race in the 10,000-meter, remaining undefeated over the five seasons of her international career. She was injured in 1996, but Derartu never backed down even after she lost in the 10,000-meter. In 1998 and 1999 she gave birth, but came back in 2000 in the best shape of her life. She has a total of 6 world and Olympic gold medals.

After a year recovery following the birth of her second child in 1999, Tulu took to marathon running. She finished second in the Madrid marathon in 2008, and was the first Ethiopian woman to win the New York marathon in 2009 in a time of 2 hours 28 minutes 52 seconds. In an interview with Runners' World, Derartu said: "I really didn't expect to win, I was very surprised [...] I thought I would get back to that level, but I thought it would take much longer. When I ran Philadelphia, it gave me an idea of what could happen. Until I stop running, I expect to run at a high level". Derartu is still winning races and bringing, the gold, silver and bronze medals to her people and country. In her short but on-going career, she has managed to win 35 gold, 12 silver and 15 bronze medals in international competitions.

## **Derartu Tulu's legacy and social influence**

Derartu Tulu dreams that every woman and child in the world will have the right to do whatever they want. That is why she works hard to help her people and her country. This little girl grew up and became a lovely woman, beloved by the Oromo people in Ethiopia. To many Ethiopian girls and aspiring female athletes Derartu is an inspiration. Her achievements as an Ethiopian hero also inspired her cousin Tirunesh Dibaba to excel at the 2008 Beijing and 2012 London Olympic Games where Tirunesh Dibaba won gold medals in the women's 5000m and 10000m events. The story of Derartu Tulu evokes hope, effort and humility (Sourced from [www.ethiopians.com/derartu\\_tulu.htm](http://www.ethiopians.com/derartu_tulu.htm), <http://leftfootforward.org>).

## Meseret Defar Tola (Ethiopia) – Two time Olympic gold medalist and UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador

Meseret Defar was born on November 19, 1983 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Unlike most of Ethiopia's legendary runners who hail from the countryside, Meseret Defar grew up in Addis Ababa. Instead of running to and from school, Meseret would borrow her brother's shoes so that she could run before school each morning. Interested in racing, Meseret began her career in Ethiopia's club system, and before long, earned herself silver medals at the IAAF World Youth and Junior Championship in 1999 and 2000, respectively, before earning double gold at the next junior championship in 2000.

After failing to advance to the final of the 2003 World Championship, Meseret began 2004 with her sights set squarely on the Olympic Games. That winter, she earned her first World Indoor title, and while she was initially named only as an alternate for Athens, Meseret was entered as a last minute replacement. At Athens, Meseret laid down a devastating kick, relegating the then-world record holder to silver and making herself only the third Ethiopian woman in history to win an Olympic gold medal.

The seasons following her win in Athens confirmed her place among the all-time great distance runners: between 2006 and 2010, she won four world championship and set eight world records, and in 2012 she became the first woman to win a second Olympic gold medal at 5000m. One year later, she reaffirmed her place atop women's 5000m running by winning her second IAAF World Championship gold medal at her speciality. She has won medals at top-tier international competitions including Olympic and World Championship gold medals over 5000 metres. She broke the world record in the event in 2006, broke it again in 2007 and held it until 2008, when fellow Ethiopian Tirunesh Dibaba beat her time.

## Meseret Defar's legacy and social influence

Meseret is also ploughing back into the Ethiopian community. Children's causes are important to her and she is a major supporter of the Abebe Bikila Project, a children's running group in Ethiopia. Abebe Bikila was a well-known Olympic marathon champion who participated in 15 marathons, winning 12 of them. His successes and wins made him one of the greatest marathoners in the world. He is also the first man to win Olympics marathon twice and the first black man from Ethiopia to win an Olympics medal. He also participated in International Paraplegic Games in Norway as a paraplegic after facing a car accident. The story of his life was a source of inspiration for many people including Meseret Defar. Meseret also collects old and new athletic equipment around the world for donation to the group. Defar and her husband, Tewodros Hailu, have adopted two young children and also pay for the medical expenses of another child who is a victim of a heart disease.

Meseret Defar was appointed as a United Nations Goodwill Population Fund (UNFPA) Ethiopia National Honorary Goodwill Ambassador right after her return from her spectacular performance at the Athens Olympics in 2004, where she won a gold medal. UNFPA Ethiopia office appointed her as Honorary National Goodwill Ambassador to champion the causes of women, youth, and the prevention of HIV/AIDS. As part of her role as Goodwill Ambassador, Meseret attends various programs and events organized by the UNFPA in relation to these issues. For instance she took part in a fun run in 2006 at the Addis Ababa University to honour UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador Yuko Arimori and also traveled to Utah in the United States to take part in a fundraising campaign to help over 800 children attend quality education in Ethiopia. Meseret visited a victim of gender based violence (a young girl who was burned by acid by a spurned lover) in 2007 and donated a significant sum of money which was used for her medical treatment.

Meseret was also closely engaged in the one year "Stop Early Marriage Campaign" which was undertaken in 2008 and which was spearheaded by the former First Lady

of Ethiopia, Woizero Azeb Mesfin. Meseret has been closely engaged in the Women First Run event – the All woman 5 km race – which UNFPA has been supporting for the past decade promoting various issues of gender equality and women's empowerment (Sourced from [www.trackandfield.about.com](http://www.trackandfield.about.com), [www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia), [www.globalathletics.com](http://www.globalathletics.com), <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org>).

## **Tirunesh Dibaba (Ethiopia) – The Track Empress**

Tirunesh Dibaba was born on 1 October 1985 in Chefa, a small regional town in Arsi zone in the Oromiya regional state, 260 kilometres southwest of the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa from her father Dibaba Keneni and her mother Gutu Tola. Tirunesh was the third child in a family of five. Her upbringing was no different to other Ethiopian athletes, who start running from their home town to school. Tirunesh was born into a family of runners. Sporting excellence is in her genes. Her cousin was Derartu Tulu, two-time Olympic and one-time world 10000m champion and multiple world cross country medalist. Another cousin, Bekelu Dibaba, was also an inspiring runner when Tirunesh was growing up in Bekoji, while her sister Ejegayehou Dibaba had started running years before Tirunesh joined the family trend much later in her adolescent years. Sporting excellence flows through the family genes: They all hail from Bekoji, a town of fewer than 20,000 people set high in the mountains of the Arsi province, but with a freakish record for track and field success. According to Tirunesh Bekoji has produced so many great athletes starting from Derartu. At the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games Kenenisa (Bekele) and Tirunesh brought home two gold medals each. Her elder sister Ejegayehu was also an Olympic silver medalist in 2004, while younger sister Genzebe was the 2009 world junior cross country champion and a younger brother Dejene is a promising 800m runner.

Although she had such a proud family tradition, Tirunesh did not have athletics ambitions as a child. Seven years after Tulu's maiden Olympic 10000m victory in Barcelona, Tirunesh made the long trip to Addis Ababa to live with her cousin Bekelu

and her elder sister Ejegayehou in order to continue her middle school education in a more accommodating environment. But she missed the school registration deadline by six days. Although heartbroken, returning back to her hometown Bekoji, some 276kms outside Addis Ababa, was not an option that she would consider. After all, her parents, very much like the tradition in Ethiopia's rural countryside, would have pushed her to marry and bear children at an early age. Instead, Bekelu, who was a member of the Prisons police sports club herself, enrolled her into the club system and unknowingly kick started the career of one of Ethiopia's greatest ever athletes.

Those who saw the youngster train with senior teammates did not give her a chance at first. At 14, she was so young and frail in physique and many bystanders thought that she would not get far running because of the physical rigors the sport demanded. But Tirunesh had an inspiring coach (Sentayehu) who knew that her cousin Derartu Tulu ran. Sentayehu also knew that her sisters ran too and encouraged her to start running and used to tell her that she would be a great runner. He knew she would be a fast runner. Success clearly breeds success, the peak of which came at the 2008 Beijing Olympics as Dibaba and Bekele both won distance doubles. Tirunesh believes the conveyor belt of talent from Bekoji will keep producing phenomenal Ethiopian distance runners.

Ethiopia's Tirunesh Dibaba joined an elite group of seven Olympians who have won three individual track gold medals when she won the 10,000 metres in the 2012 London Olympic Games. It was a heroic effort from Dibaba who has had to fight back from a series of injuries after her Olympic 5,000 and 10,000 metres double in Beijing in 2008. She was out of competition for 16 months and only returned at the beginning of 2012. She announced she was back by winning the 10,000 metres at the Prefontaine Classic in June which set her up for her moment of glory in London.

At the 2012 London Olympics, she defended her 10,000 metres title with a powerful performance over the final 600 metres, winning in a time of 30:20.75 minutes – the fastest run that year. This made her the first woman to win back-to-back Olympic 10,000 m titles.

After the Olympics she turned to new challenges on the roads. In her half marathon debut at the Great North Run she had one of the fastest ever debut runs to win the race in a time of 67:35 minutes. Dibaba made her marathon debut in the 2014 London Marathon. She finished third in a time of 2:20:34, behind Edna Kiplagat and Florence Kiplagat. Dibaba stopped briefly near the 30km mark of the race to pick up a dropped water bottle.

## **Tirunesh Dibaba's legacy and social influence**

Tirunesh Dibaba is married to 2004 and 2008 Olympic 10,000 meter silver medallist Sileshi Sihine. After the Beijing Olympics her club, the Prisons Police, bestowed the rank of Chief Superintendent for her services to club and country. A hospital named after her is located on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. She has ventured into the hotel industry by establishing a Three Star hotel named after her set to begin service end of 2013. Local based Kellog Consult a design and construction firm has won the bid to design and construct the hotel at \$1.8 million. On July 12, 2014 Tirunesh Dibaba was among the four people who have received Honorary Doctoral Degree from the Addis Ababa University.

Sourced from [www.tiruneshdibaba.net](http://www.tiruneshdibaba.net), [www.laureus.com](http://www.laureus.com), [www.thetelegraph.co.uk/sports](http://www.thetelegraph.co.uk/sports) [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

## **Penelope Heyns (South Africa) – A Golden Penny**

Penelope (Penny) Heyns, was born on the 8th of November 1974 in the town of Springs, Transvaal in South Africa. Her parents later moved to the Natal South Coast in South Africa. She attended Doon Heights Primary School and then later Amanzimtoti High School where she matriculated in 1992. She excelled in both academics and in athletics. At school, Penny Heyns participated in many sports, including swimming, but swimming was not her first choice. At the age of 13 she became the swim team captain

at school and this is when her interest in swimming grew and despite being a latecomer, she showed potential as a good swimmer.

In a 1997 interview with Cecil M. Colwin the *Swimmers Magazine* Penny Heyns stated: “[...] I didn't grow up with a dream about Olympic gold. It's interesting that different people have asked me if I had dreamt about winning at the Olympics. But, the answer is 'no', because in South Africa we were so isolated all those years, I never thought about the Olympic Games. When I was seven years old, I told my mother I wanted to race, and swim for the school team. Our neighbour overheard me, and was amused. She told my mother she thought this a stupid idea. I was only in Class Two, and the school wouldn't let us start swimming until we were in the next class, Standard One, and about eight years old. Nevertheless, I went up to the teacher and asked if I could swim, and I tried out for the team, and made the team. This was my introduction to competitive swimming. I think it was around Standard Three that I made the South Coast and Natal Districts team, and then went on to swim in the Natal school trials in order to go to the South African Schools' Championship. I was about ten, and until then, I had never swum for a club. I recall always trying to swim a little better in my backyard pool. You know, working on my stroke. My mother's got a good eye for stroke, and she used to help me. She wasn't a swimmer, but I think she just had a talent for teaching. When I was about twelve or thirteen, I joined the club at Amanzimitoti High School. It consisted of a bunch of parents and teachers who basically just formed their own club [...]”

“In my first nationals in 1989, I came third in the 200, and my second nationals was in Johannesburg in 1990 and I got two silvers in the 100 and the 200, behind Lizelle Peacock, the reigning South African champion. Around 1991, a coach by the name of ‘Tubby’ Lynn came up to me and asked me if I wouldn't give him the chance to look at my stroke and comment on it. He suggested a couple of changes, for instance, using my head more in the forward throw, sort of copying the Barrowman style, but not quite yet, at that stage. With just these couple of adjustments, I went on to the nationals in Cape Town in 1991, and broke the South African record in the 100 breaststroke in 1:12.57. This

was also where I got my Springbok colours (South African international blazer). I won the 200, and I think I went a 2:40. The following year (1992) was the Olympic trials, and in the prelims I went a 1:12.8, and in the finals, I touched behind Sheila Turner. There was a lot of controversy about my being in the team”.

”I always seemed to find somebody I looked up to, or admired a lot, and initially, it was Julia (Russell). She had been swimming since she was a lot younger. She was my role model. We swam in the same age group. And so, all along, even later on in my swimming career, it would have been people like, I suppose most recently, Samantha Riley, because she had broken the world record. So it was always people that I admired and, initially, I wanted to swim and be like them”.

”Along the way, I learned many lessons, and I suppose these all started when I came to Nebraska in January, '93. I felt my breakthrough, in terms of international competition, would have started with the Commonwealth Games in 1994. That's where I got the bronze medal in the 100 breaststroke”.

In 1992 she was the youngest member of the South African Olympic team at the Barcelona Games at the age of 17. While she did not win any medals, she did attract the attention of the swimming world. She was offered an athletic scholarship from the University of Nebraska, where she later earned her Degree in Psychology. She was also a member of the South African squad at the 1994 Commonwealth Games, where she won a bronze medal in the 200 m breaststroke event ([www.whoswho.co.za](http://www.whoswho.co.za)).

In South Africa's second appearance at the Olympic Games as a democratic country at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, 84 athletes competed in 14 sports codes. The country won a total of five medals, three of them by two of our greatest female swimmers. Penny Heyns became an instant national heroine in South Africa and one of the stars of the Games when she won both the 100 metre and 200 metre breaststroke events – the first in a world record time of 1:07:02 and the second in an Olympic record time of 2:25: 41. With

this magnificent performance, Heyns became the only woman in the history of the Games to win the 100m and 200m women's breaststroke ([www.swimsa.org](http://www.swimsa.org)). This achievement was also recorded as South Africa's first post-apartheid Olympic gold medalist in 44 years since South Africa's re-admission to the Barcelona Summer Olympic Games in 1992.

At the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games Penny did enough to win a gold and silver but there were some signs of her slowing down from her previous form. On 20 September 2000 she announced her retirement from swimming having set 14 world records and became the only woman in history to complete the Olympic double of winning both the 100 and 200metres breaststroke ([www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za)).

Penny Heyns is regarded as the "golden girl" of South African sports in the 1990s. She is a household name in South Africa and in the world and is widely regarded as one of the greatest female breaststroke swimmers the world has ever seen.

## **Penny Heyns' legacy and social influence**

After her retirement from professional swimming in 2001, Penny returned to South Africa to join former manager and current business partner Zelda van Vuuren, to establish Omni Share Holdings (Pty) Ltd; a company tasked with managing all the Penny Heyns brand related business ventures. Over the past 15 years Penny has grown into a highly sought after professional speaker and consummate swimming clinician ([www.pennyheyns.com](http://www.pennyheyns.com)). Her experiences, both while training internationally in the US and Canada with some of the most successful athletes in those respective countries, and while competing at the forefront of international competition, have given her unparalleled insights into what it takes to get to the top, and more importantly, how to stay there ([www.5seasons.com](http://www.5seasons.com)).

Penny Heyns is now a successful business woman. She provides corporate motivational talks to both South African, international audiences and in neighbouring

African countries like Zambia, Namibia, Botswana and Swaziland. From her academic background of Psychology she also presents corporate Mental Power Seminars, partnering with a world renowned brain-based learning and development expert. Despite being a successful business woman, Penny did not forget her swimming background. She also presents swim clinics to schools and clubs in South Africa where she encourages swimmers to believe in their own potential, show them how to turn disappointment into victory and live lives in pursuit of personal excellence. Her Olympic clinics on comprehensive mental training around mind-sets and high performance, combined with stroke-specific swimming training, are highly sought after ([www.pennyheyns.com](http://www.pennyheyns.com)).

Her popularity as a swimming role model led to her being named by *Swimming World* magazine as the Female Swimmer of the Year in 1996 and 1999 ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). In 2004 Penny Heyns was nominated as an athlete's commission member to the International Swimming Federation (FINA). In 2004 Penny was also honoured by being voted 52nd in the Top Great South Africans ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). 2006 saw Penny become an inaugural inductee into the South African Sport Hall of Fame, and in May 2007 she joined the prestigious company of international icons such as Johnny Weissmuller, better known as the original Tarzan, and Mark Spitz, when she was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in Fort Lauderdale, Florida – USA. She also acted as presenter of Telkom Splash, a swimming programme on the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC1) ([www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za)).

Penny Heyns admits that "Life after swimming was not so simple and protective. Adjusting to it has taken several years", "I do miss being as fit as I was in my younger competitive days, as well as the solitude that swimming offered. Sometimes I miss the adrenalin rush and the feeling of invincibility that youth and competitive swimming offered. As I grow older I appreciate my swimming career and achievements more than perhaps a few years ago. I think when you are young you tend to take a lot for granted. I am a very private person so I try to avoid the attention, but I do still get recognised and with that comes the autograph and photo requests. I never grew up thinking I want to

be an Olympic swimmer. I merely swam because I believed I was born with a talent and thus had the responsibility to develop it fully. As a child I did fancy myself as a doctor, specifically a surgeon, but different doors opened which eventually allowed me to develop as a speaker and businesswoman – now I can't imagine doing anything different" ([www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za)).

## **Nawal El Moutawakel (Morocco) – Pioneer for Muslim female athletes**

Nawal El Moutawakel was born on April 15, 1962 in Casablanca, Morocco. Nawal, a former Moroccan hurdler, who won the inaugural women's 400 m hurdles event at the 1984 Summer Olympics, thereby becoming the first female Muslim born on the continent of Africa to become an Olympic champion. She was also the first Moroccan and the first woman from a Muslim majority country to win an Olympic gold medal. She was a pioneer for Muslim and Arabic athletes in that she confounded long-held beliefs that women of such backgrounds could not succeed in athletics. ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

Nawal El Moutawakel was born on 15 April 1962 in Casablanca, Morocco. She grew up in a modest urban environment. Her parents, employees at the Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur (BMCE), were part of the budding Moroccan middle class that started to take shape during the postcolonial era. They accepted modern cultural urban lifestyles and had a keen interest in sports, especially volleyball and judo. Nawal's father, Mohamed El Moutawakel, encouraged her to a certain degree to partake in a modern way of life without forsaking traditional Moroccan values. Local perceptions of female social roles limited the extent of the freedom Nawal could have in her modern mode of living. As a young girl, Nawal was expected to engage in housework activities in preparation for marriage. Her parents were concerned about social stigma that would result from having a daughter influenced by Western values, and were careful to check that Nawal El Moutawakel adhered to the main cultural rules of traditional Moroccan society.

Despite these social pressures that faced Nawal El Moutawakel's parents during the 1960s, they did not refrain from supporting her schooling. While at school, she received much support from her parents and started to compete at the high school level in national and regional sports meetings. By the age of sixteen, Nawal burst into Moroccan, Arab, and African prominence, becoming the Moroccan champion between 1977 and 1987 in the categories of 100-, 200-, and 400-meter hurdles; champion of the Arab world in the same categories, and African champion in 400-meter hurdle during the Cairo meetings of 1983. This performance brought her widespread reputation as a rising woman athlete in Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Arab world (<http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/5668/El-Moutawakel-Nawal-1962.html>).

In 1983 Nawal El Moutawakel received her *baccalauréat* (high school diploma) in *sciences économiques* in Casablanca. Her athletic performance caught the attention of European and American universities, who courted the young Moroccan star by offering her scholarships. She enrolled for a BA degree in Physical Education at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, where she demonstrated high levels of performance and broke many National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) records. While a student, she was asked by the Moroccan track team to compete with them in the 1984 summer Olympics in Los Angeles. She competed in the inaugural women's 400-meter hurdles event and placed first, beating her personal best by .76 seconds and winning the first gold medal by a female athlete from a dominantly Muslim country. King Hassan II of Morocco telephoned Nawal after her victory and declared that every girl born on her victory day would be named Nawal in her honour ([www.wisemuslimwomen.org](http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org)).

## **Nawal El Moutawakel's legacy and social influence**

Nawal became an Arab symbol of women's liberation and empowerment. Since her Olympic gold, she has been an active member of national and international sports organizations; she served as secretary of state for Sports and Youth, and has marketed

her image as a social activist involved in fighting illiteracy among rural girls and enhancing public awareness of the environment ([www.encyclopedia.com](http://www.encyclopedia.com)).

The athletic performance of Nawal El Moutawakel triggered Moroccan and Arab public support of women's participation in athletics. Her trailblazing achievement inspired other Moroccan and Arab women to compete in track and field regionally and worldwide. She opened the door for Arab women's participation and success in the Olympic Games. In 1992 Hassiba Boulmerka of Algeria took the gold in the 1,500 meters at the Barcelona Olympics. Ghada Souaa of Syria followed the same course, winning the gold in the heptathlon during the Atlanta Summer Olympics of 1996.

One of the main contributions of Nawal El Moutawakel remains her role in changing Arab and Islamic perceptions in regard to women's participation in sports. Despite the support of her father and of King Hassan II who saw in her a symbol for his politically liberal policies, it was a ground breaking event for an Arab woman to go against certain traditional cultural codes of behaviour. On the one hand, many Muslims criticized her dress, which went against the customary social rules. On the other hand, she also broke the Western stereotypes of the Arab woman's participation in the public life. Nawal built on her success in the United States by serving as an agent of change in her male-dominated society (<http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/5668/El-Moutawakel-Nawal-1962.html>).

Perhaps her most visible contribution to the deliberation of women in Morocco came in 1993 when Nawal organized the first Moroccan women's 5K race in Casablanca to inspire women through sports. The event has been held ever since and attracts more than twenty thousand participants making it the biggest race for women in a Muslim country. According to Tom Knight of *The Telegraph* newspaper in London, this race has sparked a cultural revolution in Morocco and he described Nawal as the architect of this revolution for women in Morocco. A race for women is nothing new in the West but in male-dominated Morocco, it marks a massive social change. In a reversal of roles that would have seemed impossible only a few years ago, the traffic stopped and thousands of

men lined the streets last Sunday to watch the fifth Casablanca Women's 10km. More than 11,000 women of all ages and from every section of society ran, jogged and walked their way round. The massed start in Avenue Hassan II brought a few giggles from spectators, especially when the field was seen to include women in their seventies, struggling to maintain their composure in headscarves, ankle-length robes and sturdy boots.

Amina Danin, a 51-year-old civil servant, said: "This is like a great party for women from every corner of Morocco. It is an expression of freedom". As founder member and president of the Association of Sport and Development, Nawal made the race free to enter by bringing a dozen sponsors to the event. She also persuaded Moroccan television to carry it live.

At that time Nawal El Moutawakel was bemused by all the fuss. "I started running in my bare feet and we all need help to get started", she said. "African women are on the move but, for me, I take only one step at a time. I was a hurdler and I am used to jumping barriers. In 1984, I was the only woman in the Moroccan team of 100 in Los Angeles. My ambition after that was to have women represented differently. Life is full of hurdles and I have learned to be patient and take them one at a time" ([www.thetelegraph.co.uk](http://www.thetelegraph.co.uk)).

Since her Olympic title, El Moutawakel has gained a positive worldwide reputation as a symbol of women's liberation in the Arab and Islamic world. El Moutawakel has been hailed for breaking down barriers for women, especially in Africa and the Middle East, and for inspiring young girls (<http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/5668/El-Moutawakel-Nawal-1962.html>). On her iconic status Nawal remarked: "I have the satisfaction of contributing to the liberation of Muslim women – or, rather, of Muslim men, who will have been forced to meditate on my ability (Nawal El Moutawakel, Philip Hersch, "Olympic Pioneer's Amazing Back Story", Chicago Tribune, March 31, 2009).

Her sport performances and her advocacy for the rights of girls and women in Africa earned her numerous accolades and awards, not only from within her country of Morocco, but also from across the globe.

In 1995, El Moutawakel became a council member of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), and in 1998 she became a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). El Moutawakel is a member of the International Olympic Committee, and she was the president of evaluation commissions for the selection of the host city for the 2012 and 2016 Summer Olympic Games. In 2006, El Moutawakel was one of the eight bearers of the Olympic flag at the 2006 Winter Olympics Opening Ceremony in Turin, Italy. On 26 July 2012, she carried the Olympic torch through Westminster, London, for the London Olympics ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

In addition to her role in changing societal attitudes toward women, El Moutawakel also inspired Moroccan women to be involved in administrative positions and to take social responsibilities as activists in fighting AIDS and illiteracy and in raising awareness about environmental issues. Her involvement in sports administration include, amongst others, Member then Vice-President of the IAAF Athletes' Commission (1989- ); National sprint and hurdles trainer (1990); Member of the Morocco National Olympic Committee, Elite Commission (1992); Deputy National Technical Director of the Royal Moroccan Athletics Federation (1993) then Vice-President (1997); Member of the African Amateur Athletics Confederation (1995- ); Member of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) Executive Bureau (1995); Member of the International Committee of the French-speaking Games (1997-2005); Member of the International Committee of the Mediterranean Games (1998- ); Member of the Board of the Arab Sports Confederation (1998- ); Vice-President of the Moroccan Association for the FIFA Football World Cup 2006 (2000); Founder Member (2000) then Vice-Chair of the Laureus World Sports Academy (2004- ); Member of the Council of the International Athletics Foundation (2001- ); Founder Member and President of the Moroccan Sport and Development Association (2002- ); Member of the International Association Football Federation (FIFA)

Women's Football Commission (2004) and of the Women's Competitions' Commission (FIFA) (2007); Chair of the NOC Women and Sport Commission (2005-2007); Member of the Jury and Technical Delegate at various national, continental and international competitions. From 2007- 2009 she has been the Moroccan Minister of Youth and Sports. She is also the president of Association Marocaine de Sports et Development (AMSD), as well as the vice-president of the Moroccan Royal Federation of Athletics. Nawal received numerous awards and distinctions in her career including the National Merit (Exceptional Order) awarded by King Hassan II of Morocco (1983); Knight of the Lion National Order awarded by President of Senegal Abdou Diouf (1998); Unicef Goodwill Ambassador (1999); Mérite National de l'Ordre de Commandeur awarded by King Mohammed VI of Morocco (2004); Grand Officer of the National Order of Merit of the Republic of Tunisia (2005); "Lifetime Achievement" award from the Laureus association (2010); United Nations Goodwill ambassador for the Millennium Development Goals (2011).

She has an active history of involvement with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that includes Member of the Executive Board (2008-2012); IOC Vice-President (2012- ); Chair of the following Commissions: Evaluation for the Games of the XXX Olympiad in 2012 (2004-2005); Evaluation of the Games of the XXXI Olympiad in 2016 (2008-2009); Coordination for the Games of the XXXI Olympiad in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro (2010- ); member of the following Commissions: Women and Sport (1995-2010) then (2014- ), Doping (working group, 1998), IOC 2000 (1999), Marketing (2000-2010), Nominations (2000-2013), IOC 2000 Reform Follow-up (2002), Coordination for the Games of the XXX Olympiad in London in 2012 (2005-2012), International Relations (2008- ), Radio and Television (2014- ) (<http://www.olympic.org/ms-nawal-el-moutaeakel>).

The IOC has utilized her positive image to improve athletics, mainly in Africa and the Middle East. In the United States, Nawal El Moutawakel was named an All-American citizen of Ames, Iowa, in 1984 and was inducted into the Iowa Sports Hall of Fame in 1994.

## Female Paralympic Gold Medalists

While able-bodied female athletes sometimes struggle with access to and opportunity for participation in sport, differently-abled athletes often have to deal with gender discrimination as well as physical or other handicaps. Despite this double-discrimination female athletes from Africa have amazed the world with their inspirational performances and tenacity. The performances of female differently-abled athletes from Africa at the Paralympic Games provide evidence to this.

According to the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Sport for athletes with impairment has existed for more than 100 years, and the first sport clubs for the deaf were already in existence in 1888 in Berlin. It was, however, not until after World War II however, that it was widely introduced. The purpose of it at that time was to assist the large number of war veterans and civilians who had been injured during wartime. In 1944, at the request of the British Government, Dr Ludwig Guttmann opened a spinal injuries centre at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Great Britain, and in time, rehabilitation sport evolved to recreational sport and then to competitive sport. On 29 July 1948, the day of the Opening Ceremony of the London 1948 Olympic Games, Dr Guttmann organised the first competition for wheelchair athletes which he named the Stoke Mandeville Games, a milestone in Paralympics history. These Games later became the Paralympic Games which first took place in Rome, Italy in 1960 featuring 400 athletes from 23 countries. Since then they have taken place every four years. In 1976 the first Winter Games in Paralympics history were held in Sweden, and as with the Summer Games, have taken place every four years. The word "Paralympic" derives from the Greek preposition "para" (beside or alongside) and the word "Olympic". Its meaning is that Paralympics are the parallel Games to the Olympics and illustrates how the two movements exist side-by-side ([www.paralympic.org](http://www.paralympic.org)).

Female from Africa were involved in the Summer Paralympic Games since 1960 when the Games were held in Rome. From 1960 to 1972 the gold medal winners were

white females from the African country of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). It was only in 1980 in Moscow that a black female athlete won a gold medal in the Javelin throw in her class.

Table 3 below provides an overview of the gold medal performances of female African athletes at the Paralympic Games:

**Table 3 – Female African Gold Medal Paralympians (Summer Games)**

PARALYMPIC GAMES	FEMALE GOLD MEDAL PARALYMPIAN	AFRICAN COUNTRY	SPORT EVENT
Rome, 1960	Margaret Harriman	Rhodesia	Archery 2 gold medals
Tokyo, 1964	Margaret Harriman		Archery 2 gold medals Dartchery
	Lynette Gilchrist	Rhodesia	Mixed pairs open Club Throw Swimming 3 gold medals
	Leslie Manson-Bishop	Rhodesia	Swimming 3 gold medals
Mexico City, 1968	Jacqueline Thompson	Rhodesia	Swimming 2 gold medals
	Sandra Coppard	Rhodesia	Swimming 2 gold medals
	Leslie Manson-Bishop	Rhodesia	Swimming
Munich, 1972	Sandra James	Rhodesia	Swimming 2 gold medals
Moscow, 1980	Lucy Wanjiru	Kenya	Women's Javelin
Barcelona, 1992	Sofia Djelal	Algeria	Throwing Events F56-58 Women's Discuss Women's Javelin
	Nadia Medjemedj	Algeria	Throwing Events F56-58 Women's Shotput
	Mary Nakhumicha	Kenya	Women's Javelin
Sydney, 2000	Edith Nzuruike	Nigeria	Women's Javelin
	Iyabo Ismaila	Nigeria	Women's Powerlifting

Continued

Continuation

PARALYMPIC GAMES	FEMALE GOLD MEDAL PARALYMPIAN	AFRICAN COUNTRY	SPORT EVENT
Sydney, 2000	Victoria Nneji	Nigeria	Women's Powerlifting
	Patricia Okafor	Nigeria	Women's Powerlifting
	Christelle Bosker	South Africa	F37 Throwing Events Women's Discus and Women's Javelin
	Zanele Situ	South Africa	F54 Throwing Events Women's Javelin
Athens, 2004	Tshotlego Morama	Botswana	400m sprint event, T46
	Lucy Ejike	Nigeria	Women's Powerlifting
	Somaya Bousaid	Tunisia	T12, Women's 1500m
	Afrah Gomdi	Tunisia	F40 Throwing Events Women's Javelin Women's Shotput
	Zanele Situ	South Africa	F54 Throwing Events Women's Javelin
	Natalie du Toit	South Africa	Swimming S9 Women's 100m butterfly 100m freestyle 200m individual medley 400m freestyle
Beijing, 2008	Sanaa Benhama	Morocco	T13 partially sighted sprinting events Women's 100m, 200m, 400m
	Eucharika Njideka	Nigeria	Women's Shotput and Discuss
	Lucy Ejike	Nigeria	Women's Powerlifting
	Raoua Tlili	Tunisia	F40 Women's Shotput and Women's Discuss
	Ilse Hayes	South Africa	T13 Sprinting Events Women's Long Jump
	Natalie du Toit	South Africa	Swimming S9 Women's 50m Freestyle 400m Freestyle 200m Individual Medaly 100m Freestyle 100m Butterfly
London, 2012	Raoua Tlili	Tunisia	F40 Women's Shotput

Continued

Continuation

PARALYMPIC GAMES	FEMALE GOLD MEDAL PARALYMPIAN	AFRICAN COUNTRY	SPORT EVENT
London, 2012	Ivory Nwokone	Nigeria	Women's Powerlifting, 44kg
	Esther Oyewa	Nigeria	Women's Powerlifting, 48kg
	Joy Onaolapo	Nigeria	Women's Powerlifting, 52kg
	Natalie du Toit	South Africa	Swimming S9 Women's 200m Individual medley 100m butterfly 400m Freestyle

The name that stands out from the above medal table is certainly that of Natalie du Toit from South Africa who is undoubtedly the most inspirational female Paralympian. Her commitment, tenacity and dedication to rebuild her sporting career after a motor cycle accident is legendary. Her inspirational story is related below.

## **Natalie du Toit (South Africa) – First disabled athlete to qualify for Summer Olympics**

Natalie du Toit was born on 29 January 1984 in Cape Town, South Africa and attended Timour Hall Primary school. She completed her scholastic education at the Reddam House, Cape Town after which she studied for a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Cape Town, specializing in genetics and physiology ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), [www.inspiringwomen.co.za](http://www.inspiringwomen.co.za)).

Natalie began swimming on a professional level at the age of 14 years when she participated in the Commonwealth Games in 1998. She not only had big dreams for her future, but a good start to her athletic career as well. Yet her entire world changed in February 2001, when the 17-year-old was accidentally hit by a car while she drove on her scooter. She was rushed to hospital, but after one week the doctors were forced to operate and amputate one of her knees. They amputated through the left knee and inserted a

titanium rod into her broken femur. "I remember asking my mom, when are they going to amputate? My mom's answer was that they already had", said Natalie, according to Big Talk Entertainment Her inspirational story only truly began when Natalie resumed training three months after her operation and still in pain. Despite the daily need to wear a prosthetic, she decided to swim with other disabled people. She started from scratch, first trying out the Freestyle stroke, but her disability prevented her from swimming properly. So she focused and trained on other strokes that prevented continuous or strenuous use of her legs. She swims without a prosthetic leg ([www.capechameleon.co.za](http://www.capechameleon.co.za)).

Since the accident, Natalie spent seven years training and rehabilitating, and to the worlds astonishment her work paid off when she swam in the Olympic Games. "I have always had a dream to take part in the Olympic Games, and losing my leg didn't change anything", she said ([www.capechameleon.co.za](http://www.capechameleon.co.za)). During the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, Natalie, who was then 18 years old, won both the multi-disability 50 m freestyle and the multi-disability 100 m freestyle in a world record time.

Natalie won gold in the 800 metres freestyle at the All-Africa Games in 2003 competing against able-bodied swimmers as well as silver in the 800 metres freestyle and bronze in the 400 metres freestyle at the Afro-Asian Games. At the 2006 Commonwealth Games she repeated her previous performance by winning the same two golds as she had in Manchester. In 2006 Natalie also won six gold medals at the fourth IPC World Swimming Championship, finishing third overall in a race which included 36 males and 20 females. She also made sporting history by qualifying for the 800 m able-bodied freestyle final – the first time that an athlete with a disability had qualified for the final of an able-bodied event

On 3 May 2008, Natalie became the first differently-abled athlete to qualify for the 2008 Beijing Olympics after finishing fourth in the 10 km open water race at the Open Water World Championships in Seville, Spain. Her time was only 5.1 seconds off the winner in a race that made its first Olympic appearance in Beijing. At the time Natalie admitted that

it has been a long road which has taken an incredible amount of determination and hard work. She is rightfully proud of her achievement and feels that she earned her place at the Olympics on merit, which has nothing to do with whether she is disabled or able-bodied. At the Beijing Olympics women's 10 km race, she finished in 16th place, 1:22.2 minutes behind the winner. She also took part in the 2008 Summer Paralympics, winning five gold medals. She narrowly missed qualifying for the Olympics in Athens in 2004, but during the Paralympics that were held in the same city, she won one silver and five gold medals. On 27 August 2012, just three days before the start of the 2012 Summer Paralympics, she announced her intention to retire at the end of the event ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

## **Natalie du Toit's legacy and social influence**

Natalie's inspirational efforts to claim back her life after a motorcycle accident won the respect of the world and earned her many awards.. At the closing of the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games, she was presented with the first David Dixon Award for Outstanding Athlete of the Games. David Dixon Award is a four-yearly award given to the outstanding athlete of each Commonwealth Games, based on their performance at the event, fair play, and overall contribution to their team's participation at the Commonwealth Games. The award was introduced in the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester and is named after the former honorary secretary of the Commonwealth Games Federation for 17 years, David Dixon. South Africa's Olympic Committee chose Natalie to carry their flag at the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics opening ceremony, making her the first athlete to carry a flag in both Olympics and Paralympics Games in a single year.

In August 2002 she was awarded the Western Cape Golden Cross award. During the award ceremony, the Western Cape Premier at the time, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, said she had gone beyond gold and swam her way into the hearts of not only South Africans but the whole world. Natalie was voted 48th in the Top 100 Great South Africans in 2004 by South African Broadcasting Corporation and in December 2009 she received the South

African Order of Ikhamanga in Gold for her exceptional achievements in swimming. The Order of Ikhamanga is awarded by the State President of South Africa to South Africans for exceptional achievements in music, culture and sports. In 2008 Natalie also won the Whang Youn Dai Achievement Award. This award is named after South Korean Dr Whang Youn Dai, who contracted polio at the age of three. She contributed her life for the development of Paralympic Sport in Korea and around the world. At the 1988 Paralympic Summer Games in Seoul, Korea, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) recognized her lifelong contributions to the Paralympic Movement and established the "Whang Youn Dai Achievement Award" (formerly the "Whang Youn Dai Overcome Prize"). Since then, this award has been presented at every Paralympic Games to one male and one female athlete who each best exemplify the spirit of the Games and inspire and excite the world. On 10 March 2010, Natalie was awarded the Laureus World Sports person of the Year with a Disability for breaking down the barriers between disabled and able-bodied sport ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

Although in demand as a motivational speaker, Natalie does not consider herself a campaigner for athletes with physical disabilities. She has her personal dreams and strives for her personal goals - and she encourages and inspires others to do the same ([www.southafrica.com/blog/natalie-du-toit](http://www.southafrica.com/blog/natalie-du-toit)). Natalie has devoted her life to charity and for children in South Africa. She helps young cancer patients, people with disabilities who cannot afford to pay a wheelchair and many more. Natalie also raises funds to pay the travelling cost of the young athletes whose parents cannot afford the expense. Natalie was given the below poem by Benjamin E Mays by one of her coaches:

The tragedy of life does not lie in not reaching your goals.  
The tragedy of life lies in not having goals to reach for.  
It is not a disgrace not to reach for the stars,  
but it is a disgrace not to have stars to reach for.

Natalie's story of courage and motivation has touched many lives, including that of Tracey Hawthorne, who is a freelance writer and editor based in South Africa. She wrote an incentive book about Natalie's life, her accident, everything than the athlete had to overcome to finally end up on top. Her powerful biography is called, Natalie du Toit – Tumble Turn. Natalie is greatly appreciated and well known in South Africa and all around the world. Her story gives hope, not only to disabled people, but also to anyone who has a dream to achieve. She shows that we can do anything if we really want to and that we should never give up whatever the trials may be ([www.capechameleon.co.za](http://www.capechameleon.co.za)).

## Female athletes and role models from Africa

In the previous paragraphs the inspirational stories of five female gold medal Olympians were presented. All five of these inspiring women took part in individual sports recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). There are, however, also other inspirational female athletes and female teams. John Nauright (2013) rightly pointed out that the female soccer teams in African countries are rising. The South African Banyana Banyana women's soccer team is a force to reckon with in continental Africa and international soccer. In the West African country of Senegal women's basketball is the third most popular sport after men's soccer and African wrestling. In Malawi, a poor landlocked country in Southern Africa, Netball is the most popular sport for girls and women and their national team, the Malawi Queens, are a role model to the female population. Women's boxing was only included in the 2012 Summer Olympic Games but the Zambian welterweight female boxer, Esther Phiri, is described by Meier and Saavedra (2009) as a role model that may function to encourage and sustain female involvement in sport in Zambia. The inspirational stories of **Esther Phiri (Boxing)** and the **Malawi Queens (Netball)** as female sport role models in Africa are presented below.

## **Esther Phiri (Zambia) – World Junior Welterweight Boxing Champion**

The notion of gender in sport is socially constructed according to cultural norms and often results in gender stereotyping different sports as either masculine or feminine. Boxing for women is frowned upon by a large part of society as it is perceived a masculine sport. Females who participate in boxing challenge the traditional cultural stereotypes associated with boxing. Boxing as an item in the Olympic Games was only introduced in the 2012 London Olympic Games. Of the 26 sports contested in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, boxing was the only one that did not include women. This is seen as a reflection of lingering cultural perceptions that boxing is dangerous for women. Although boxing is now included in the Summer Olympic Games programme, it remains a controversial issue especially in Africa where traditional roles of men and women in society are still strong in some African countries. The appropriateness of boxing for women again came into the spotlight after the death of South African female boxer Phindile Mwelase who passed away after being in a coma for two weeks following her fight against Liz Butler. Zambian female boxer Esther Phiri, however, challenges gender stereotypes in Africa with her performances in women's boxing.

Esther Phiri was born in Lusaka, Zambia on January 1, 1987, the fourth of eight children. She has three brothers and four sisters. Her father was a businessman and her mother stayed at home. Her father died when Esther was in grade 6 and the family fell on hard times without his income. Esther lived with her grandmother in the low-income urban township of Mtendere in Lusaka, Zambia and joined her grandmother selling groceries and second hand clothes in the market. Esther dropped out of school and became a single mother at age 16. A turning point in Esther's life came about when the international NGO Africa Directions started a HIV-awareness project focused on youths in the area, combining health education and sport. Esther was the only girl in a physical training program that focused on boxing. She had been a tomboy from an early age was also motivated by boxing videos so she took the training seriously despite the negative

reaction of some of the young males around her. Her talent for boxing soon became obvious and she was referred for further training to former Zambian amateur champion Anthony Mwamba, who had made it to the quarter finals of the 1988 Olympics. Mwamba has since become Esther's coach.

Esther's professional boxing career did not start well. She made her professional debut at Mindolo Dam, Kitwe, Zambia on July 23, 2005 against Jota Sumaili of Zambia, fighting her to a four-round draw. Esther had a number of fights that led up to her retaining her WIBF Intercontinental Junior Welterweight title on March 18, 2007 at Mulungushi Conference Centre in Lusaka, Zambia, Esther won an eight-round unanimous decision over Monika Petrova of Sofia, Bulgaria. Zambia's Esther Phiri showed that women can compete in spheres most people think least likely when she traded explosive punches with Bulgarian Monica Petrova in an international boxing tournament in Lusaka. Attracting over 8000 impressed spectators, Zambia's first ever international female boxing bout challenged gender stereotypes as the two exhibited professional boxing skills rivalling that of male counterparts ([www.afrolnews.com](http://www.afrolnews.com)).

The publicity following Phiri's wins made her a household name in Zambia. Billboards with her picture line streets and she is now rich by Zambian standards, Phiri, her daughter, and her mother are able to live in a middle-class Lusaka neighborhood, and Esther, previously illiterate, is being sponsored to finish her education. Esther has since announced her retirement from professional boxing following the decision by Zambia Professional Boxing and Wrestling Control Board (ZPBWCB), a boxing motherbody, to slap her promoter and trainer, Anthony Mwamba, with a three month ban ([www.lusakatimes.com](http://www.lusakatimes.com)).

## **Esther Phiri's legacy and social influence**

Esther Phiri has encouraged adolescent Zambian women to engage in sports not only to guard against unplanned pregnancies and have sexually transmitted diseases but

to become disciplined and focused. She advised her fellow young Zambians to engage in sports as it would take up most of their time which they would spend drinking and engaging in many antisocial vices ([www.afrolnews/genderlinks](http://www.afrolnews/genderlinks)).

Hone Liwanga as a member of the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network in Zambia, reported on Esther Phiri's influence on Zambian society and gender equality in sport as follows:

"Where Zambia still failing to attain 30 percent women representation in parliament and other key political positions as required by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Ms Phiri's success was set to have great meaning to women and girls in Africa and the rest of the world. At their 2001 Summit in Malawi, SADC Heads of State and signed the Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport, which aimed to raise levels of regional co-operation and encourage the development and implementation of related policies and programmes consistent with the principles of the region. The Protocol recognises the importance of sport to national and regional development, and says that member states shall cooperate in ensuring gender equality and equity in the areas of culture, information and sport. However, in reality, girls face many challenges in becoming involved in sports. Family and home responsibilities, along with social expectations, often mean that girls are not encouraged to take up sport. Yet sports are known to be a vital part of personal development, building skills and exposing young people to different experiences, such as competition, which develop confidence and self-esteem. The country has a world champion in Ms Phiri, who has proven to be a force to reckon with and an inspiration to other Zambian women that there is power in undertaking challenging things. Young girls watching Ms Phiri must be thinking that if boxing is open to them, then surely any path is theirs for the taking. The need to have equal participation of men and women in all sectors of society in Zambia cannot be over-emphasised, gender activists hold. 'It is time that women are recognised as key partners in national development, and part of that is sports development', they say. Sports development is seen as one way that countries can develop the potential of all of their people, including women and girls. An active role

in the sporting world can have many benefits, not only for health, but also socially and economically. The boxing careers of Ms Phiri and Ms Petrova, along with women like US-based Lailah Ali, the daughter to former boxing legend Muhamed Ali, are set to continue to popularise the sport" (www.afrolcom).

Meier and Saavedra (2009) labelled the influence of Esther Phiri on girls and women's sport in Zambia as the "Phiri Effect" and likened it to the "Moutawakel Effect" referring to the influence that the achievements of female 400m Moroccan hurdler Nawal El Moutawakel had on girls and women in Muslim African countries. They stated that besides Esther Phiri's role as model for children and teenagers, she promoted the notion of organised recreational. Esther's popularity and influence as role model in Zambia is also illustrated by her feature appearance on the cover of the Zambian women's magazine Beauty in 2007.

Even the Zambian President at that time, Levy Mwanawasa acknowledged Esther's contribution to gender equality in Zambian sport. It is widely accepted that Esther Phiri successfully managed to change many perceptions on women's sport and especially female boxing and her world class performances in the boxing ring provided motivation to other female athletes.

## **Malawi Queens – Changing the lives of Girls and Women through Sport in Malawi**

Malawi is amongst the world's least developed and poorest countries ranking 153 out of 169 countries on the Human Development Index. Malawi is largely rural. Nearly 85 % of the total population of Malawi lives in rural areas. The population structure in Malawi is very young. The national mean age is 21 years, and 54% of the total population is younger than 18 years old. The agriculture sector supports the majority of livelihoods in the country

and provides employment for nearly 90% of the population. With a largely rural population the Malawian Government depends heavily on outside aid to meet development needs.

The Malawian government faces challenges in building and expanding the economy, improving education, health care, environmental protection and becoming financially independent. Although the 1995 Malawi Constitution guarantees equal rights to men and women, in reality significant gender disparities exist in areas such as the law, education, agriculture, health, employment, credit accessibility and political participation.

Women are a major force in Malawi's socio-economic activities. Although women constitute 52% of the population, serious gender disparities still exist in terms of access to, and control of productive resources and opportunities for participation in the country's development. Around 67% of women are literate compared to 77% of men. There may be gender parity in primary education but more girls than boys drop out because of social values and behaviour that do not support girls' education.

Netball is a popular participant sport in countries of the Commonwealth of Nations, specifically in schools, and is predominantly played by women. As Malawi forms part of the Commonwealth it is the most popular sport for girls and women. Netball is big news in Malawi, where the word for netball is *nchembre mbaye* – "nchembre" meaning "mother". According to the International Netball Federation netball is played by more than 20 million people in more than 80 countries. Games are played on a rectangular court with raised goal rings at each end. Each team of seven members attempts to score goals by passing a ball down the court and shooting it through its goal ring. Players are assigned specific positions, which define their roles within the team and restrict their movement to certain areas of the court. During general play, a player with the ball can hold on to it for only three seconds before shooting for a goal or passing to another player. The winning team is the one that scores the most goals. Netball games are 60 minutes long. Variations have been developed to increase the game's pace and appeal to a wider audience such

as the Fast5 tournament and adapted version of the games for younger girls. The major international tournament in Africa is organised by the Confederation of Southern African Netball Associations, which invites teams from Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and the Seychelles to take part. Even though netball became an International Olympic Committee recognised sport in 1995 it has not been played at the Summer Olympic Games.

The national netball team of Malawi, called the **Malawi Queens**, is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the world although Malawi is such a poor African country. The Malawi Queens is regarded as the most successful Malawian sport team in history. This achievement makes the Malawi Queens immensely popular in Malawi and ideal role models to girls and women in the Malawian society. The Malawi Queens advocate publicly that sport has the power to change children's lives and the potential to keep children safe. Members of the Malawi Queens netball team regard themselves as examples of how sport can transform lives and impart valuable skills such as team work, inclusion and confidence, diversity and is a huge source of inspiration in the Malawian community. The Malawi Queens is an energetic team and plays with an entertaining mix of acrobatic splits, funky flick-shots, deceptive one-hand passing, slippery cross-court plays and head-banded female athletes brimming with charisma.

As such the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) entered into a partnership with the Netball Association of Malawi and appointed the Malawi Queens as local UNICEF Ambassadors to help children with a range of challenges from those affected by a state of emergency to those facing the threat of child marriage.



**Above** – Friendly netball match between the Malawi Queens (Malawi’s national netball team) and the Bangula FP School Team. Picture UNICEF.

In February 2015 the Malawi Queens visited Bangula camp as local ambassadors for UNICEF. Since devastating floods hit Southern Malawi towards the end of 2014, Bangula has become home to over 4,500 displaced children and families. The visit helped the netballers to learn more about how UNICEF helps children in emergencies and also provided an opportunity to bring a message of hope to the thousands of displaced children that look up to them as role models. “The Malawi Queens are uniquely placed to inspire and motivate girls and young women across the country, to be the best they can be”, according to Liz Twyford, UNICEF’s Sports Programmes Specialist. “We are working together to promote national campaigns to reduce violence against women and girls and to improve girls’ chances of finishing school and delaying marriage. Through this ground-breaking partnership girls across Malawi will be supported to grow up healthy, safe and well educated”.

The Malawi Queens’ visit began in a temporary learning tent which serves as a Community Based Childcare Centre where over 300 children come together every day to play, learn and importantly eat healthy porridge. Here, the Malawi Queens proved to be

naturals, interacting with the young children by playing, singing and dancing. The Bangula School which has recently transitioned back from housing those displaced during the floods to normal learning was also visited. The Malawi Queens received a warm welcome from the whole school. In a country where netball is the national sport, many young girls play netball and the children were excited to see their sporting idols. A match was organised which saw the professional netballers and some of the pupils warming up and playing together in mixed teams. The Bangula School, as with many schools in Malawi, does not have the equipment required to play netball. Uniforms were borrowed from the boys' football team; some girls had shoes, others were barefoot. The playing equipment was complemented by equipment provided by the Malawi Netball Association. The match was eagerly watched by just over 1,000 children, with deafening cheers and applause ([www.marivapost.com/sports/netball](http://www.marivapost.com/sports/netball)).

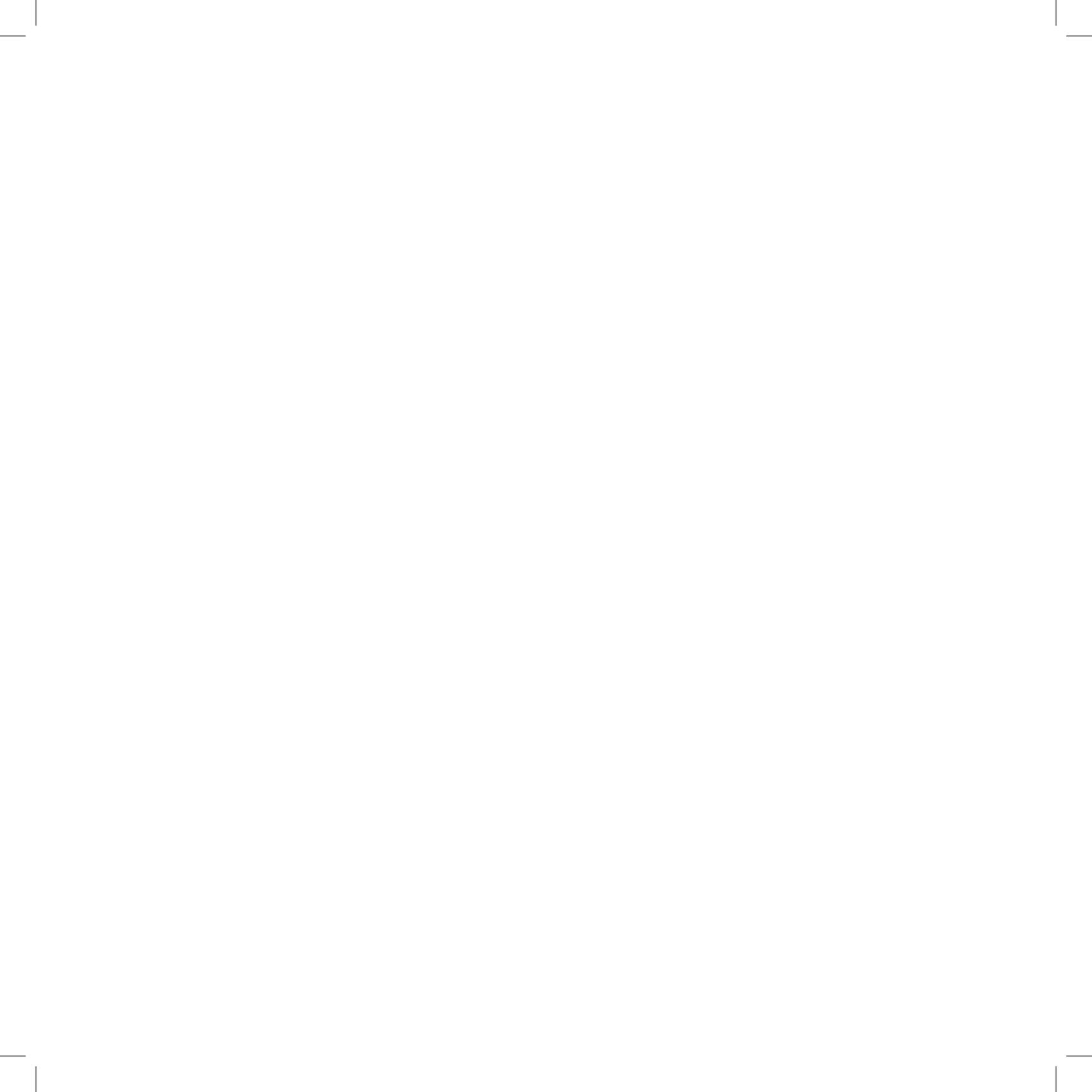


**Above** – Mary Waya (coach, left) and Sherif Malunga (District Sports Officer, right) with Caroline Ngwira (Queens player, 2nd left), Sindi Sitowe (Queens player, 2nd right) and selected players from the netball team of Bangula FP School (Pictures UNICEF).

The Malawi Queens' dedication and commitment to social change through sport is echoed in the words of Carol Ngwira, captain of the Malawi Queens. "I have an obligation to help my fellow Malawians in whatever capacity. It was a great experience to play with the young girls. This place is quite far and remote and we didn't really expect to see what we saw. We identified at least four youngsters who can easily be groomed to become part of the future Malawi Queens" ([www.maravipost.com/sports/netball](http://www.maravipost.com/sports/netball)).

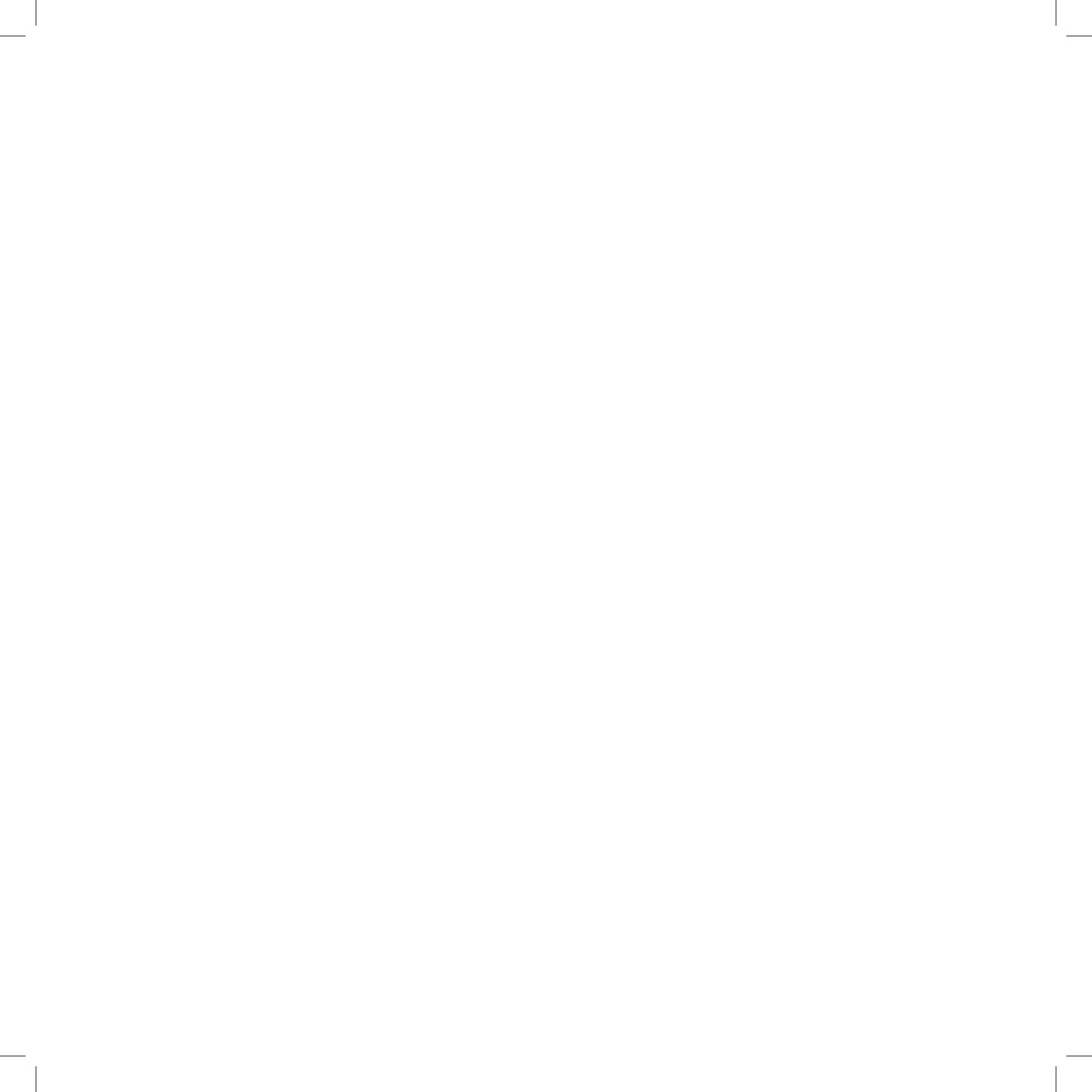
## CONCLUSION

In this chapter the inspirational stories of six elite female athletes and one elite female sport team from Africa were told. Despite physical, cultural and societal challenges these women opened up pathways to be "the first" in the continent to show the way for future generations of girls and women taking part in sport. Penny Heyns became the first female swimmer to win gold medals in the 100m and 200m breaststroke at an Olympic Games, Derartu Tulu, was the first black female athlete to win a gold medal at the Summer Olympic Games, Meseret Defar became the first female athlete to win two gold medals in the 5000m at Summer Olympic Games, and Tirunesh Dibaba the first woman to win back-to-back Olympic titles in the 10 000m for women. Nawal El Moutawakel is regarded as the symbol of women's liberation in the Arab and Islamic world after her historic 400m hurdle Olympic gold medal while Natalie du Toit was the first person to qualify for both the Paralympic and Olympic Games. The inspirational story of Zambia's female boxer Esther Phiri proves that sportswomen in Africa is strong and willing to challenge societal barriers and perceptions.



**5**

**SPORT-FOR-  
DEVELOPMENT  
TRAILBLAZERS  
IN AFRICA**



# INTRODUCTION

The continent of Africa has no shortage of international development and humanitarian projects. Africa has enormous potential but at the same time enormous challenges. Africa's greatest resource to overcome the challenges of the continent lies in the human capital of Africa – the people of Africa. Africa's global influence is growing and its pan-African identity is growing through numerous social phenomena, including sport. Gender equality in many social spheres, however, remains a challenge in the continent of Africa. Addressing gender equity through sport in Africa requires more than merely sport equipment and safe spaces to participate. It requires dedicated people to initiate, drive and sustain sport-for-development projects. Many of these dedicated people are women who understand the reality of gender inequality in sport and in African societies in general. The women who will be celebrated in this chapter are not elite female athletes, but women who unconditionally believe in the power of sport to enhance the lives of girls and women in Africa. Many of these featured women you will find in far and remote corners of Africa. The effect of their work is often not known outside their immediate area whilst the effect of the work of other women, like those in the Mathare Youth Sport Association (MUSA) provides an example to the world. Although there are many sport-for-development projects in Africa run by Africans in different communities and with different resources and by different women, they all seem to strive towards the common outcomes of fostering self-esteem and empowerment, facilitating social support and inclusion and providing opportunities for leadership and achievement for girls and women of Africa.

In this chapter the stories of **Maqulate Onyango** (MUSA, Kenya), **Grace Nyinawumuntu** (AKWOS, Rwanda), **Felicite Rwemalika** (AKWOS, Rwanda), **Janet Motah**, **Rachel Muthoga**, **Jackline Mwende**, **Lydia Kasiwa**, **Lilian Mbeyu**, **Frimilla Nine**, **Dorcas Amakobe** (Move the Goalposts, Kenya), **Wadzanai Katsande** (Edmund Garwe Trust, Zimbabwe), **Tendai Gambiza** (Zimbabwe), **Emertha** (AKWOS, Rwanda), **Peninah Nthenya Musimi** (Safe Spaces, Kenya) and **Majidah Nantanda** (Uganda) will be told. Some of these women were participants in sport-and-development projects in Africa and benefitted tremendously

from their involvement and are now investing back into their respective communities to help other girls and women share in the benefits and empowerment strategies.

None of these inspirational success stories would have been possible without organisations in Africa providing structure and support to the numerous projects that touched the lives of these African women in their communities. In order to provide supporting context to the narratives of the women, a short overview of each of these organisation will be given before the inspirational women's stories.

## **Maqulate Onyango – Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA), Kenya**



Above – Maqulate Onyango (Mathare Youth Sports Association, Kenya)

**Maqulate Onyango's** story is embedded in the story of the **Mathare Youth Sport Association (MYSA)** in Nairobi, Kenya.

## **MYSA's story – Two times Nobel Peace Prize nominee**

Mathare, Nairobi in Kenya is one of the largest and poorest slums in Africa. Disease is widespread and AIDS has stolen the lives of many in the community. MYSA was started over 20 years ago in 1987 when United Nations Advisor, Bob Munro, was working for sustainable development in Kenya. During a visit to Mathare outside Nairobi, Kenya he saw local kids playing a soccer game with a ball made out of polythene bags and twine. He offered to referee a game if they helped pick up litter in the area. Much to his surprise, they immediately agreed. Inspired by this experience, Bob set up a self-help organisation linking football with slum clean-up sessions. The idea was simple – teams were awarded extra league points for completing clean-up sessions, giving them the incentive to show up. From these humble beginnings MYSA has grown from a small youth group to one of the most successful sport-for-development projects in the world that promotes sports for development and one of the world's leading sport-for-development flagships. MYSA's vision is simple: "Give youth a sporting chance on and off the field". In essence MYSA empowers young people to fulfil their potential and improve their lives and their communities through sport. Great emphasis is placed on gender equality in all MYSA's programmes and they believe in "letting girls shine through sport".

MYSA uses sport, and particularly football (soccer) combined with community outreach and development activities, to give young people the skills and confidence they need to aim higher, achieve more and improve their lives. MYSA is run by and for the young people who take part in its activities, and gives all of the boys and girls in Mathare an opportunity to dream of a brighter future for themselves and Kenya. MYSA is about more than football. It's not just goals on the pitch that count. Children get points from taking part in other activities off the pitch, like collecting litter in the areas where we live, or participating in HIV/AIDS awareness sessions. This earns extra points which could be the difference between a team winning the league, or being relegated. Points are not awarded for skills but are earned for taking part. MYSA also offer other sports through their Kids with Disabilities program. These include volleyball, basketball and netball, basketball, wheel

chair basketball. Just like sport, arts activities such as dance, drama and music, are really good ways of reaching out to people, bringing people together and helping people develop as individuals and MYSA also runs the Haba Na Haba arts and culture programme.

MYSA has won many awards for their efforts to empower and bring hope to the children of Africa in Mathare. Amongst the many awards, MYSA has been nominated in 2003 and 2004 for the Nobel Peace Prize, a Laureus Sport for Good Award in 2004 and in 2011 was awarded the Beyond Sport Award in Sport Leadership ([www.mysa.org](http://www.mysa.org)).

## **Maqulate Onyango's story (MYSA)**

The first time Maqulate Onyago left her hometown – Mathare, a sprawling slum only a few square miles in area that houses more than half a million people in Nairobi, Kenya she was 16 years old and had learned to read just three years earlier. She played soccer, and was sent as a delegate of the sports association that organizes leagues for the children of the slum to present at a conference on women's participation in sports in Zambia. She was awed by the opportunities to play that women had there.

Her slogan is that sport is a language everybody can understand. It is a language that has no barriers, a language that does not know race, background or gender.

Sport, in fact, is what pulled Maqulate out of her life in Mathare – where poverty, hunger and AIDS are epidemic and many young people turn to drugs, alcohol or prostitution in the absence of better options. She turned to soccer, and it set her on a path to literacy, employment and a position as a respected mentor for other girls. Now Maqulate is helping the girls she works with use sports as a lever to a better life, and she's starting at the top.

Within four years, Maqulate graduated from secondary school and took a job with MYSA. Her parents, with whom Maqulate lived with, were initially suspicious that she was

earning a living. "When I got my first salary, I did not take it home with me because I was afraid I would be beaten", she says. "So my first salary was handed over to my mother just for her to confirm that I was really working for the youth and not getting the money from boyfriends or any illegal dealings. After she confirmed that I was working for the youth program, she became very OK with it and became very supportive". Over the years Maqulate continued refereeing, Trained girls on social psycho-social issues that affect the girl child, trained other women to be referees and became a match commissioner – the official who serves as the governing body's representative, inspecting the field, verifying the players' identities, and basically making sure both teams and the host follow the official rules for a sanctioned match. One of our key objectives in MYSA is to develop role models and leaders for the upcoming youth in Mathare.

Now 32, Maqulate is the Manager of MYSA's Youth Rights and Protection project, as well as a match commissioner in the Kenyan Premier League. In 2010 she was the first Kenyan woman to serve as match commissioner for the Confederation of African Football, in a Cup of Nations qualifier between the women's teams from Ethiopia and Ghana.

Maqulate participated in the Global Sports Mentorship Program in 2014, which was started by the U.S. Department of State and ESPNW to pair emerging leaders from around the world with American female executives in the sports industry. Its goal is to create a network of women and girls who strive to create positive change in their home communities through the power of sports.

Maqulate was attached to Saatchi and Saatchi LA as a mentor organisation and she got an opportunity to interact with Oprah Winfrey, Evan Ryan (Assistant Secretary of State), Laura Gentile (President of ESPNW) and Maria Shriver. After the program she came back to her organization and did a mentorship for the girls which brought in 55 under 14-16 girls through a one week workshop that was about reproductive health, sexual gender based violence, drug abuse, financial literacy, dream mapping and child rights and protection.

Maqulate's strength lies in her background and the passion to create a safe space for women and build confidence in them for a better future through sports (Narrative provided by Maqulate Onyango, 2015).



Above – Maqulate with Oprah Winfrey (Pictures provided by Maqulate Onyango)

## **Janet Motah, Rachel Muthoga, Jackline Mwendu, Lydia Kasiwa, Lilian Mbeyu, Frimmilla Nine, Dorcas Amakobe (Moving the Goalposts, Kenya) – A tribute to the unsung heroines of Africa**

The stories of the above women are embedded in the story of “Moving the Goalposts” in Kilifi, Kenya.

### **Moving the Goalposts', Kilifi, Kenya, story**

According to Moving the Goalposts, girls and young women in the Kilifi District, Kenya are amongst some of the world's poorest and most disadvantaged people. Low retention in school, early and unwanted pregnancies and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS trap them in a cycle of poverty. Moving the Goalposts Kilifi (MTG) uses local and youth centred approaches to tackle these issues ensuring girls' participation as leaders and decision

makers. The project uses football to develop essential life skills such as confidence, leadership and self-esteem of vulnerable young women. Football also provides a unique entry point for reproductive health, human rights and economic empowerment initiatives and awareness campaigns.

MTG started with a sport and development project in Kilifi in 2001. Many people could see that there were huge gender differences being experienced by men and women and boys and girls in Kilifi in terms of opportunities in school, health, leadership roles and employment. The women of Kilifi thought that if they took a new approach – using football to tackle gender disparities – they might be able to get to the heart of some of the problems faced by girls and women in Kilifi. With a small amount of seed funding from the British Council the project was set up with advice and support from Moving the Goalposts UK (a registered charity in the UK). MTG's vision is that girls and young women's human rights are realized and protected. Using results based and rights focused approaches through football, MTG aims to strengthen and promote the voice, impact and influence of girls and young women, in the rural settings of Kilifi and Kwale County and in Kenya. In realising MTG's vision the women aims to promote football for girls, develop female leadership through football, provide reproductive health and HIV/AIDS information and services, provide economic opportunities, and promote access to education for girls and women. The practical benefits for girls flowing from their involvement in the project include girls becoming leaders of their own activities, improved physical health and fitness, improved educational chances and increased employment and self-employment opportunities. Girls' participation in football also yields emotional benefits like increased confidence, ability to make informed choices, increased mutual trust, support and respect, opportunity to form safer and more fulfilling relationships and collectively empowerment of a collective group of rural girls and young women.

The project started with 120 girls in 2001 that grew to more than 3000 to date. More girls started to play football in and out of school, participating in tournaments organized by MTG. MTG has branched out with a reproductive health rights, HIV and AIDS program,

an economic empowerment program and it has established participatory monitoring and evaluation in all projects. MTG, Kilifi celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2012 and is going from strength to strength. Readers are encouraged to visit the website of MTG, Kilifi, Kenya ([www.mtgk.org](http://www.mtgk.org)) to familiarize themselves with the valuable work of a group of dedicated women.

## The collective stories of the inspirational women of MTG, Kilifi

Although the women of Kilifi and Kwale counties in Kenya realized and experienced gender inequality and resulting socio-economic challenges in their surroundings, they did not sit back and merely accepted it. A group of passionate and committed women formed MTG and their inspiring stories of their involvement in MTG and how participating in sport and physical activity changed their lives are presented below to celebrate the often unsung heroines of Africa.

### Rachel Muthoga (MTG, Kenya)

**Rachel Muthoga** joined MTG in 2013 as Executive Director, a unity-based organization, established in 2001 that works with girls and young women in Kilifi and Kwale Counties in Kenya. Rachel is an advocate of the High Court of Kenya with over 7 years' experience. She was admitted to the Bar in 2006 and has varied practice and policy making experience. She holds a Master of International Legal Studies with a Certificate in Human Rights from Georgetown University in Washington DC where she graduated with Distinction. She undertook her undergraduate law studies at the University of Nairobi, graduating in 2004. She has worked as the Kenya Coordinator of an international development agency working on a program to end impunity for sexual violence in Kenya through strengthening prosecution of such cases amongst other interventions. Her previous experience also includes having worked in a private law firm before joining the

Law Society of Kenya, the umbrella bar association as a program officer implementing the advocacy work of the society including legal aid and civic education. She thereafter worked for the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi as the Legal Assistant to the Resident Legal Advisor in the Department of Justice, working on the implementation of the Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative and providing development support to the criminal justice system in Kenya. Rachel is a member of the Independent Medico-Legal Unit Justice Network, a group of human rights defenders and sits on the Leadership Team of the Kenya Chapter of Prison Fellowship International dealing with restorative justice and prison reform. She has been an active civic educator and trainer on women's rights. With her background and experience in Human Rights and Women's Justice and Empowerment, Rachel Muthoga is spearheading the innovative efforts of MTG, Kilifi.

## **Jackline Mwende (MTG, Kenya)**

**Jackline Mwende** joined MTG as Program Manager. Her function is to coordinate the implementation of the organizations programs on football, health, education, economic empowerment and community engagement. She also assists in policy advocacy and resource mobilization. Jackline was a fellow of the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) and holds a Master's Degree in Human Rights from the Central European University. She has also studied Anthropology and Gender Studies at the University of Nairobi.

Her passion for gender empowerment shines through in her personal story: "I consider it divine for me to be working at MTG at this point in time. For a long time I have been in search for an entity that challenges gender stereotyping head-on, then one day I saw MTG while I was doing something else with a different category of women. I remember that I went asking anyone who cared to listen what they knew about MTG. Little did I know that two years later I would be here, doing what I like best and a bonus of being taught how to play professional football".

## Lydia Kasiwa (MTG, Kenya)

**Lydia Kasiwa's** story is a glowing example of the success of MTG's in the lives of young women. Joining MTG meant a turning point in Lydia's Kasiwa life. The shy girl gained confidence and was in 2007 employed as the peer led health education coordinator. Five years later, she represents MTG at national and international for a. She has her Community Development Diploma and is ready to pursue a degree course at university level. Lydia grew up in Tezo village in Kilifi district, Kenya. She shared a home with her mother and father, her father's two other wives and 10 full and half siblings. Her father dies when she was seven and she lost her mother to illness in her teens. One of Lydia's stepmothers helped her to finish secondary school but her plans to become a primary school teacher never realised due to financial difficulties. Lydia saw herself and older sisters growing idle and depressed. Apart from working to make their small family business survive, they had no work of their own. Like so many other young girls in Kilifi Lydia thought she had no other option than to get married. Lydia, however, envisioned another future for herself and her siblings. She started talking to women and girls in the community to explore her options and heard about Moving the Goalposts. She went to talk to the staff at MTG and they invited her to join as player and volunteer ([www.womenwin.org](http://www.womenwin.org)).

Lydia narrates her story as follows: "Before I was employed in MTG I started as a player and a volunteer. The name of my team was Black Mamba. That was in 2004. Joining MTG was a turning point in my life. Before that, I used to be shy and I lacked confidence. MTG managed to build my life skills such as confidence, organizational skills, team work, communication skills and much more. This was possible through the opportunities MTG gave me such as playing football, conducting peer education sessions, officiating football matches, organizing and chairing committee meetings. MTG built my capacity also through trainings. I was trained as a peer educator, a counsellor and a referee. Through taking part in MTG activities I realized my potential. Last year I got my diploma in community development at Pwani University College and from September this year I pursue my degree in Environmental Science at the same institute. What I like most

in MTG is the unique approach of using football for development. The focus on education for girls is very important in our area. I also like the fact that girls are given opportunities to run their own activities in and outside MTG in order to fulfil their potential in life. The rights-based approach is a good example of MTG being in the forefront in making sure that the rights of girls are respected. I wish MTG a much longer life! I wish it to continue with the good work of transforming the lives of young girls in Kilifi County and Kenya as a whole through football".

### **Janet Motah (MTG, Kenya)**

Unlike most of the MTG staff members, **Janet Motah** joined Moving the Goalposts not as player, but as an Intern in August 2011. After her course in Mass Communication she found out about the organization when she came to visit her cousin in Kilifi. It was a turning point in her life. She is currently a Monitoring and Evaluation assistant at MTG.

Her story provides testimony to MTG's vision: "I got interested in MTG when I visited my cousin in Kilifi and felt encouraged when I saw girls playing football and taking up leadership roles. I later registered and started playing football at Mnarani league field. The most interesting part is that I had never played football in my life and I was not used to seeing girls playing football for fun with commitment. I became a resource centre volunteer after the internship and enjoyed my time with the children, volunteers, staff members and the community who visited the resource centre to study and use the computers. I got more experience in working with the community and I can say that I learnt how to work with children through MTG. I have also gained experience in many areas especially in monitoring and evaluation during my life as a volunteer. The organization has been a turning point in my life due to several trainings I underwent like video editing, child protection policy, Participatory Rural Approaches and report writing. I also secured a job as assistant monitoring and evaluation. I like my job, especially writing the monthly newsletters, data collection and photography because I feel motivated when I hear girls' tell their stories on

how their lives changed through their involvement in MTG activities. I also feel good when my pictures are used in social media, print media and reports. I like the way MTG handles girls and how they are empowered without discrimination. I wish MTG all the best and hope that it will extend to other counties to empower more girls in future”.

### **Fathime Hamisi (MYSA, Kenya)**

**Fathime Hamisi** joined MTG was she nine years old and a very talented football player. She is still a member of the MTG United football team, although she is now a staff member. Currently she is a Monitoring and Evaluation Assistant and an enormous asset in our staff team. Fathime has always been a great role model and she still is. Who better than a young woman who grew up in MTG to help other young girls to believe in themselves?

She shares her story: “I am Fathime Hamisi. I joined MTG in 2002 as a player. Because I was an active football player and the captain of my team I was trained in different leadership roles like coaching, peer education and Kicking AIDS Out leader. I completed my secondary school education in 2012. I was appointed as the MTG United under 16 head coach and I travelled with the team to Moshi for the East Africa Cup. At the time I was also a volunteer in the resource centre under the Monitoring and Evaluation department. But I wanted more. I applied for a position in MTG. I was invited for three interviews. And I succeeded the third time! I’m now working as M & E assistant”.

### **Lilian Mbeya (MTG, Kenya)**

**Lilian Mbeya** likes how Moving the Goalposts works with girls by giving them a chance to nurture their talents and build their leadership and football skills. She acknowledges that MTG cannot do this without its members, stakeholders, staff and

donors. The support of all has taken MTG where it is now. Lilian hopes that these groups will together see MTG growing.

Lilian narrates her experiences as follows: "I joined Moving the Goalposts in 2005 after completing secondary school. I joined because I was interested in playing football and mostly in refereeing. So in MTG I volunteered as referee, a peer educator and tournament committee member. As a volunteer I represented MTG in forums in and outside Kilifi. As a staff member I have been divisional coordinator Kaloleni, coach the coach and training coordinator. Since this year I am the Football coordinator. I like how MTG works with girls by giving them a chance to nurture their talents and build their leadership and football skills. MTG is supporting girls to complete their studies based on what they want and is achievable. Nowadays we also involve girls with a disability to play football and interact with other girls. MTG could not have done it without its members, stakeholders, staff and donors. This support has taken MTG where it is now. And I hope that together we will continue and see MTG growing".

## **Fathime Khamsi (MTG, Kenya)**

Moving the Goalposts provides opportunities for girls and young women for sustained involvement in the organisation. Evidence of sustained involvement is reflected in the story of **Fathime Khamsi**. Fathime joined MTG in 2003 as a member of the Black Mamba football team. She serves on the Bahari division Girls' committee as assistant secretary, works as coach for U/12 teams and as member of the MTGK Super team.

Fathime reflected on her involvement in 2006: "On my first time when I joined MTGK I was not a good player, I could not kick the ball for even one metre. For me it was difficult. I was shy because it was my first time to play football and also I was thinking that football it's only for boys. But I didn't give up, I continued going to the practice until the time I

dribbled and passed our coach who is Rose Konde. I was very happy and that day I will never forget it until rats plan their births. I could not play with boots, when I wear them I play with them and after 5minutes I take them off. The first thing which I want to say is how MTGK helps me in coaching. It has given me a lot of skills. Although I could not talk in front of people, but now I have gained something in coaching and also I have confidence and I am still learning. When I am playing football I try to show all of my skills because my aim is to go and play in the national team. MTGK also has helped my body to be physically fit and also has change my mind in different ways. After school hours I just go to the field then I have my practice after there I am tired with no time for thinking of boys. I would like to say thanks to MTGK because it has done a lot of things which I didn't know them before. Also my parents allow me to play football because I am doing well at school".

### **Frimmilla Nine (MYSA, Kenya)**

**Frimmilla Nine** joined MTG in 2004 as volunteer and is also active in her roles as peer educator, coach and girls' committee member. Her story is one of hope and development: "I had just completed my primary school education in 2003 in Malindi district. I was unable to continue with my secondary education because my mum had no money. Even now she doesn't have because she's a business women and the whole family depends on that business for all our needs. During that time I was bored and I normally filled my mind with bad thoughts. One day I heard my sister talking about MTGK football for girls. I listened to her very carefully and I asked her to give me more details about that organization. After knowing all about MTGK it was around September 2004 when I decided to join MTGK practice. I didn't get any problem because I was a player since I was in primary school. I thank God because I was not asked for anything even registration fees because what I know in other football clubs you have to pay registration fees. It was like a dream to me because I was known within a short time due to my hard working. I want to thank MTGK for the skills they have given me because I would not have them if not through MTGK. For example I

have been trained in elimination of child labour, committee roles and responsibilities, peer education, girl child rights, coach the coach and participator methodologies. At first I didn't play with sport shoes and I used to get a lot of injuries but now I thank MTGK for giving me a gift of shoes & stockings because now I am not getting any more injuries. I only knew a few places but for now I know many places because I have been to play there. Since I was born I don't know the ferry in Mombasa - Likoni crossing but now I can explain what it looks like. May God bless MTGK so that it can continued with its activities".

### **Dorcas Amakobe (MYSA, Kenya)**

**Dorcas Amakobe** joined MTG in 2009 and is now Community Liaison C-ordinator. Joining MTG was a humble experience for Dorcas. She was a trained professional in social development, but new on the football pitch. The MTG girls taught Dorcas how to play football and they learned leadership- and life skills from her in return. After becoming a community liaison coordinator Dorcas' life has never been the same again.

Dorcas tells her story: "My professional background is social development, counselling, first aid and project management. I got to know MTG when I offered first aid training during the first residential training. During the week I spent with MTG I became interested in working with girls and young women. MTG is an inspiring organization For me as a professional, being in MTG is a learning process. The first unique skills I acquired in MTG were playing football, motivating others and never quitting on challenges. Most people assume that when you are employed you are an expert. But in MTG I was provided a level learning ground where I learned from the girls and they learned from me. I can now play football with the girls. Since I joined MTG I have not seen stagnation in the programmes. The number of players and schools registered and staff members employed have been growing every year. Being part of a growing institution I have never looked back. I am enjoying every moment. In our social development field, touching life is very

important. In MTG, colleagues have always been there for girls and fellow staff members. Sometimes when I travel away from Kilifi, I miss our working environment, vibrant girls and staff members. This has led to a strong and admirable team that will swing in action at all times.

After becoming a community liaison officer, my life has never been the same again. I have built my capacity through trainings attended in MTG, regionally and internationally. I have gained experience in the field by participating in baseline surveys and organizing events in the community. Despite the current outcry in the country that women have been favoured by the Kenyan Government and development partners, I still feel that women should step up to mold other young women. They should take up political positions and acquire skills and knowledge. I would wish to see that she will turn 50 years with girls in Kilifi taking up leading roles in their communities. The future will shine with women. Tunaweza!"

## **Association of Kigali Women and Sports (AKWOS, Rwanda)**

The stories of **Félicité Rwemalika, and Emertha** are embedded in the story of AKWOS, Rwanda. The story of AKWOS was told earlier in this publication and will not be repeated. The stories of the founder of AKWOS and two of the female coaches are narrated below.

### **Félicité Rwemalika (AKWOS, Rwanda) – Beacon of hope for the women of Rwanda**

The exceptional efforts and passion of **Félicité Rwemalika** was touched on already in the chapter on Advocacy and Policy. Her contributions are, however, not limited to advocacy and policy making. She has her feet firmly planted on African soil and is actively involved

in projects and programs on grass roots level in Rwanda. Her vision and aspirations to empower girls and women through sport and physical activity, and specifically football, gained momentum through the projects and activities of AKWOS. The vision and mission of AKWOS are supported and enhanced by Women Win, an international organization based in the Netherlands. Women Win claims to be the first international organization with a sole focus of providing support for innovative sport and physical activity programs for empowerment and creating a social movement around sport for the advancement of women's rights ([www.womenwin.org](http://www.womenwin.org)). Many organizations and people commented on and spoke about the invaluable contributions of Félicité to empowering girls and women through physical activity and sport in central Africa. In March 2015 she told her own story in this chapter as example of inspiring trailblazers in Africa.

Born in a family of 13 children, of which 11 were girls and two boys. I was the oldest among the girls in this large family. A family largely dominated by females wasn't popular in that era and thus received many insults and disrespect. This cloud weighed heavily on our mother who usually felt like an outcast in her community, guilty and sad for only giving birth to girls. This prompted her to keep trying until finally, she conceived and gave birth to 2 boys.

Due to the genocide-acts in Rwanda in the late 1950's, I and my family had to flee to Burundi and later on to Uganda, our growing up was very hard. However, one thing was always on my mind and that was the inferiority complex of being a girl and being insulted by neighbours, teachers and even relatives. As a girl in the 60's, the only notable work one could do, was cook, clean and make sure that the home was catered for. However, I had a vision that I was destined for much more.

As a young girl, I had grown up fond of my father; an educated man which was very rare at the time, finding an educated father. He defied the existing culture to love, and care for his numerable daughters just like he did his boys. Through the mentorship and love from my father, I grew to accept and move on from the inferiority complexes that had gripped me from childhood. And decided to embrace my gender and live a normal and good life.

One of the things I enjoyed most about my father was his weekend sport activities. He was a footballer and every time he went for a game on a bright Saturday morning, he always took me with him. I loved watching him play. Sadly, every time I left with him for a game, my mother strongly admonished me not to touch a ball. Although I had the desire to play with my dad, I never got the chance to due to the cultural settings of the society then. This only served to keep the desire burning because from that time I vowed never to give up but to work hard and build a platform so that my daughters would never have to experience what I passed through. I dreamed of a time when girls, just like boys would express their talents and desires without restrictions.

I was inspired by my childhood to work hard towards helping women and girls to have an equal right to their desires. I felt that if a girl wants to play soccer, she should. If a girl wants to go into business, she should. The burden of being held-back by ignorant cultural barriers was what prompted me to focus on building my career and life around women to protect and encourage their value within their society.

With this background, I decided to pursue Nursing, a field in which I was able to help the sick, while building my capacity as an educated woman; and contributing to making her society a better place. I went on to get married and was blessed with 3 beautiful daughters and a son.

One major thing in life that had great impact on my life was my husband going to a liberation war. He was a soldier during the liberation war of Rwanda (1990-1994.) He left me with the 4 little children and life was not easy. We were evacuated from the soldier's premises given that my husband wasn't around anymore and I had to deal with the hardships of making ends meet with just a single nurse's salary. This season in my life however, served to bring the entrepreneurial talent out. I invested in a restaurant and started from scratch and built my own business. I was probably one of the first, few, to begin a 24/7 restaurant in the community. I had to work as a nurse in a big hospital and

at night I continued on with the restaurant, then wash up quickly in the morning and go to the hospital. I was determined not to fail in life. I knew that as a woman, I had the mandate to take care of my family and children. I didn't have to be a man to do so. And I succeeded greatly. My children were able to go to decent boarding schools and my life improved slowly by slowly. The insults and diminishing-looks I received as a girl child had all been set to discourage my strength as a woman/person. However, I looked past that to become one of the hardworking and inspiring women to young Rwandan girls today.

After the liberation war of Rwanda, I returned to Rwanda. A country that had been battered by a horrific genocide in 1994 and over a million innocent people had been killed in just 3 months! In a country that at the time was filled with hatred, death and a bleak future, I decided to pull out of nursing profession to concentrate on my entrepreneurial endeavours. I started a beauty salon, the first of its kind in Kigali, at that time. I invested in a woman-only business that would serve to bring women of all kinds to the salon and advised them on better ways to improve their lives and families. This served to be the turning point in my life and paved way to implement my vision hence impacting on many the lives of Rwandan girls and women.

This was immediately after the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and one of the most atrocious things that happened was the mass rape and torture of women. Many women lost their lives after being brutally abused. For those who survived such a terrible ordeal, the pain and shame of being HIV/AIDS positive literally grounded their lives to sorrow, despair and sadness. However, when some of them visited my salon, I got the opportunity to talk to them and encourage them. During this time, I got in touch with many women who were hurting and down. I felt the need to help them, not only through encouraging, but something tangible as well. I felt the need to rebuild their esteem and confidence and try as much as I could to bring value back into their lives. I felt the need to reach out and simply do as much as I could to pull them up.

During this time, I reflected upon the love for sports that I had had during my time as a tender aged girl. I had been deprived of the right to take part in sports because I was a girl however; I was determined to use this tool to rebuild the lives of many.

Sport wasn't popular among the women in Rwanda. It was perceived to be "only men's" field and the thought of women participating was culturally a burden and disadvantage. So I began by campaigning and being the sole woman to single handily pick the responsibility and voice out for women to take part in sports if they want to. Gladly I succeeded in making this notion a reality. Women who were confined to pain, sadness and loneliness now had the chance to cooperate and enjoy playing sports. The act of giving girls the confidence to do sports like men was a way of empowering and lifting their spirits.

I decided to begin and officially start up an NGO called (Association of Kigali Women Footballers' which later turned into the Association of Kigali Women In Sports - AKWOS). I would move mainly from school to school encouraging girls to take up sports and physical exercises in order to keep fit and challenge the world that girls, too, can take part in sports and still be responsible females.

One of the major ways that I used to market girl's football in Rwanda was organizing football matches around the country and giving a theme for the event. For example I decide that in a certain district, where HIV/AIDS was rampant, I give a theme like "Women in Sports against HIV/AIDS" where during the half time of a soccer match, I would get to share and advise the people of that area on how to abstain from contracting the disease and for those sick, a good diet that can help them stay in good shape. Such brilliant ways of marketing women sports, mainly focusing on football was a success. Ministries in-charge of different domains began partnering with me because they saw the great work and courage she possessed in taking women sports to a great level. Some of the different themes under which I organized these matches were; Gender, Unity and Reconciliation and HIV/Aids. All of this happened between the years 1997 and 2002. This was a time I used to market and voice out women in sports.

In 2002, my numerous works hadn't gone unnoticed. The Rwandan government finally, officially and broadly accepted that girls and women to take part in any sport of their liking. A Women's National Football league was initiated. This was happily received and acknowledged by the public.

Due to a number of projects around the country, one of the major things done by me was to bring together different women from all districts of the country and train them on how to begin a football club. I had gained this knowledge through numerous trainings that I sponsored myself to. My objective was to empower trainers who'd in-turn go and train others as well. Through this system, when the 2002 women's national league was officially started I had already helped build numerous teams across the country that were in place to challenge for and kick start the tournament.

The strides made by Rwandan Women in sports, particularly football, is very impressive. AKWOS has continued its work as a women organization, in mobilizing and bringing women of all sorts together. One of the main objectives is to advise and encourage physical education and sports in the women fraternity in order to curb down certain diseases and keep a healthy life.

AKWOS maintains its stance as a platform for women to meet and talk to each other about the different problems they face, and how to rebuild their lives through different projects and ways. AKWOS has been a sports-encouraging organization with a goal of helping and improving the lives of girls and women. These different talks and meetings that have taken place between the women has visibly aided in improving their self-confidence and esteem, which was once at an all-time low just 20 years ago. AKWOS, on-top of helping women and girls to take part in sports has moved an extra mile, through educating about different and important issues. This has been a great part of many Rwandan women's lives.

AKWOS has helped instil brevity and courage amongst women. Once a society that was used to women playing second fiddle to the men, today Rwandan women stand high and courageous. It's amazing to see what sports can do. Giving women and girls the chance to pick up a ball and play soccer was a great tool of empowerment and push. Women, after being given the leeway to play football never looked back. For most, being a housewife and serving the home was their only job. They had to wait for their husbands to give them a dollar to go buy lotion or Vaseline. However, through the teachings, education and empowerment by AKWOS, many women managed to begin playing football, joining teams and bettered their livelihoods and those of their families. Most of these women earn salaries and take good care of their homes, children and families. For the girls, most have managed to pay their school fees and are almost through with their high school studies. Through football and sports, most women and girls have managed to fight poverty while keeping a physically fit regime and sporty body. The changes can be seen among the Rwandan Women in general. As AKWOS leader I helped open this door. A door through which women envisaged their own freedom to participate and do any sport they wanted to.

I am the founder and CEO of the Association of Kigali Women in Sports (AKWOS), this was a dream come true. Being able to empower women and girls through sports and nurturing their gifts and talents has been worth the while. I continue to encourage and work hard to see all girls in Rwanda to come out and participate in sports, mainly football. AKWOS has helped change the mind set of women at every level. AKWOS won't settle until the dream of girls and women in sports has been realized. Through the numerous workshops and projects AKWOS has done, I was able to get exposed to different organizations like Women Win, an international sports development organisation from the Netherlands where I was among the board of directors as the only African woman that helped efficiently. I also was able to pattern with NIKE to join forces and support girls and women in sports. Their generous offer lasted 3 years in which free sports supplies and clothing were given to AKWOS in support of their work.

In 2012, I was the recipient of the ASHOKA award which is given to outstanding people every year, who help in making a change and bettering their community. My work through AKWOS is a success story. However, many challenges remain. The primary challenge is funding of different projects. AKWOS for a number of years has been working as a result of personal, internal financing therefore it has been hard to hire skilled staff to do the human resource work. Funding remains a huge obstacle in AKWOS and limits our vision to achieve all our objectives. However, this hasn't slowed down the progress and work in the organization we strive to use the available resources and keep organization running.

I was voted to the Rwandan Olympic Committee as well as the commissioner in charge of Women and Sports and a commissioner in charge of women football in the Rwandan football Federation. Work continues to be done in terms of educating and enlightening women about the positive effects of taking part in sports and physical education.

The impact AKWOS is having in Rwanda isn't confined to this area alone. I have been invited to Namibia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Bangkok, Casablanca, South Africa and the USA to present and educate different women on how I was able to take women in sports to another greater level. I have also given presentations about Gender Equity in sports for social change, effects and struggles of HIV, women in post genocide Rwanda, the role of sports in Peace Building and sports as a tool for Unity and Reconciliation and Poverty Reduction by educating women to create agriculture cooperatives and join saving groups so that they are able to be independent. AKWOS continues to give presentations and organize educative seminars and workshops around the country and the region.

AKWOS reserves special praise for His Excellency President Paul Kagame of Rwanda who individually gave us the first funding and encouragement back in 1999. President Kagame, a visionary leader, personally backed the idea of women taking part in sports and

gave them full support. AKWOS today, is still the only organization that empowers women through sports and education".

(Narrative by Ms Felicite Rwemalika, felicite\_rwema@yahoo.com).

Félicité Rwemarila also mentors and empowers the next generation of girls and young women to carry on the work in Rwanda. The story of **Grace Nyinawumuntu**, narrated below by Félicité, bears testimony to Félicité's enthusing work.

## **Grace Nyinawumuntu (Rwanda) – Protégé of Félicité Rwemalika**

A notable figure among the girls who had earlier began playing soccer as a result of AKWOS' mobilization of girls, was Grace Nyinawumuntu. Grace was a very spirited girl who took up interest in 1997. She was eager to learn and participate in sports especially football. At that time she was in high-school and showed great potential. With the aid of AKWOS, she took up football and began playing.

She did this during her high-school until she graduated and went to University. Right before enrolling, she felt the desire and fire within her to study sports education at a degree level at the Kigali Institute of Education (now University of Rwanda, College of Education). However her parents strongly admonished and discouraged her. Since she had been under AKWOS wing, she felt the urge to seek advice and mentorship from me (Félicité). She managed to explain her desires to study sports education, a male dominated field, and carry on with her passion for women sports.

Through AKWOS, I (Félicité) had earlier sighted Grace as a potential leader and activist of the women's sports and therefore invested a lot of confidence and advice into her. I advised Grace to take up the courage to tell her parents that she wanted to study

sports education and gladly for her, she succeeded in convincing them. She went ahead to study sports and made history when she graduated in 2003 as the first woman in Rwanda to obtain a sports education degree. This was a huge step for Grace and AKWOS too. For all the sensitization and work we had done for over 5 years prior to that was beginning to pay off.

I continued to groom Grace closely. One very huge and important decision that I shared with Grace was in addition to refereeing, which she had taken up after her studies, and undertook a coaching training. Due to the fact that Grace was one of the few girls who had been with AKWOS from the beginning and had developed into a woman with charisma and passion for Women sports, I encouraged her to solely focus on women football. And this was another breakthrough decision. Grace became a coach and was very good as one. She was appointed AS KIGALI Women football club coach in 2006 and has taken 5 league cup championships to date. The government of Rwanda noticed her contributions as a coach and again, history was made when she was announced as the first female coach to take over the National Women's Team, a position she holds to date.

This position made her the first female coach to assume the leadership of any Women National Team in East Africa and Africa as a continent. Grace currently serves as both the Rwandan Women's National team coach and the club coach for AS Kigali. She continues to defy odds through her hard work and commitment to Women in sports.

Grace Nyinawumuntu is a tangible example of how AKWOS has been successful. Through her example, AKWOS has gone on to help, facilitate and take part in 40 Rwandan women rising to become fully fledged and educated football referees. Five of these are certified by the Federation of International Football Agency (FIFA). Grace dreams of the day that football for women is valued as much as football for men.

## Emertha – AKWOS Female Football Coach, Rwanda

Emertha's (surname unknown) is a coach under AKWOS' Women's Soccer Unity initiative in Rwanda. The Women's Soccer Unity initiative was started in 2005 with the aim of providing training for female football layers aspiring to become coaches, trainers, referees and match commissioners. This aim empowers girls and women in Rwanda through football in all regions of Rwanda and to create a solid women's football federation, as envisaged by Felicite Rwemalika the founder of AKWOS. The training takes place in Kigali City, Rwanda. On completion of their training participants return to their home regions and organize their own female football teams on a volunteer basis. Qualified female coaches, trainers, referees and match commissioners from the same region often work together. One would, for example, act as coach, another the referee or match commissioner. At the same time these women take on the development of peace and reconciliation and the eradication of gender-based violence by using football as a platform for education and outreach ([www.womenwin.org](http://www.womenwin.org)).

**Emertha** is an example of one of the trained coaches of the Women's Soccer Unity initiative. Her story is retold with the permission of the Women Win Organisation. "When Emertha joined sport, I realized I had leadership skills. Emertha is 33 years old and the mother of two children of her own and guardian who were left orphaned after the death of their parents. She has been with AKWOS for four years as a coach and volunteer coordinator of Western Rwanda province's six female football teams. She has used sport as a platform to bring together two hundred female sex workers in her province to arrange for them to get paying jobs through the local government as public sanitary workers, cleaning the streets. Through coordination with a local NGO, Emertha has also organized an academic scholarship fund which provides funds for drop-out girls to return to school. Emertha is the President of a Youth group (15-35years) in her province and also the President of Women living with AIDS support group. Emertha says that after the training she got from AKWOS she was able to train others. From the time she had the idea to come and mobilize women, to help them to do everything that they

can do through sport. In September 2008 Emertha along with two other AKWOS coaches used their skills to help another women's organization (AFESCO) start-up a football program for girls in three refugee camps outside of Goma, DRC Congo. Together they organized a week of training for twenty five young girls from AFESCO teaching them about empowerment, peace and reconciliation and sport training along the AKWOS curriculum. According to Emertha these girls in the refugee camps in DRC Congo had no idea about sport. The girls never believed that women could do sports. When they were informed about the role of sport in fighting HIV and gender-based violence, they were so amazed that Rwandan women were already so advanced. The women from DRC Congo wished the same capacity for themselves (Empowering Women and Girls through sport and Physical Activity, Women Win).

## **Peninah Nthenya Musyimi (Kenya) – Creator of Safe Spaces for girls**

The story of Peninah Nthenya Musyimi is embedded in the story of Safe Spaces in Mathare, Nairobi, Kenya.

### **The story of Safe Spaces**

Safe Spaces, Mathare was created to provide safe spaces for girls in the sprawling Mathare slum in Nairobi to meet, talk and play sport in an all-girls environment. Girls can play basketball, do yoga and drama and receive vocational training in auto mechanics. Safe Spaces aims to create emotional and physical safe spaces for girls through providing areas where girls can exercise and train free of gender-based violence and social prejudice, using peer education where everyone is both a teacher and a learner, treating all girl participants equally and with respect and freedom of speech, providing training and scheduling the meetings at appropriate times during the day and monitoring

the participants closely with the help of parents and guardians and by inviting guest facilitators and experts to speak on reproductive health. Safe Spaces argues that girls need safe spaces because of fear of wrong judgment, heightened parental resistance to girls' activities outside the home due to sexual harassment and sexual exploitation because of poverty due to sport and physical activities' potential to increase self-esteem and empower girls to make informed decisions. At these safe spaces which are usually at church compounds and partnering organizations' premises, girls talk about healthy relationships, communication, growing up, sex, poverty and peer pressure, making right choices in life and the power of assertiveness and saying no that what they do not want ([www.womenwin.org](http://www.womenwin.org)).

## **Peninah Nthenya Musyimi's story**

Peninah grew up until the age of 24 in the slums of Mathare in Nairobi, Kenya. She lived with her parents and her younger sister without electricity and sanitation while the family struggled on a daily basis to get work and enough money to survive. Peninah was lucky enough that someone in the community paid her secondary school fees allowing her to complete her education. Every day for four years, Peninah awoke at 5am in the dark and started to walk 16 kilometres to school and back. The first year she did not tell the head teacher how far she walked even though she was sometimes reprimanded for being late. When Peninah finished secondary school she aspired to go on to university. Peninah became aware of scholarship for girls playing basketball, a sport not usually played or learned by girls in the Mathare slum. Peninah was determined to go to university and taught herself to play basketball in one month and managed to get a scholarship to study Law. She beat all odds through perseverance, sacrifice and hard work to be the first girl to ever graduate from the Mathare slums.

Her experience in the slums taught her the value of safe spaces. Peninah says "I believe if I am safe and if I can provide a safe place for girls in my community then we

can all work together to develop our community as professional women from the slum. In this way the face of the slum will start to change for the best. We can have a peaceful and caring world, where the winds of fury will no longer blow. Physical safety to me means being full of energy, free from sexual harassment, free from drugs and free from sickness. Emotional safety to me means being able to think positively about myself and be free from stress and desperation and to have the freedom to talk about whatever I like in the environment. It means being free from any form of isolation and intimidation and having the power within to share my achievements with my fellow girls in my community. I want to be respected for who I am give respect back in exchange".

Peninah firmly believes that sport and physical activity programs provide girls and women with the opportunity to convene in public space around the common interest of sport. In this way girls and women are given the chance to assert their independence outside their homes, to build strong social networks and to increase the likelihood of creating active citizens

(The stories above and below are retold from Empowering Girls and Women through Sport and Physical Activity and with the permission of WomenWin).

## **Wadzani Katsande (Zimbabwe) – Edmund Garwe Trust**

The story of Wadzani Katsande is embedded in the story of the Edmund Garwe Trust in Zimbabwe.

### **Edmund Garwe Trust's (EGT) story**

The Edmund Garwe Trust was founded in 2006 by **Wadzani Katsande**, A Women Win Fellow from Marondera, Zimbabwe. The Edmund Garwe Trust through the leadership

of Wadzani is assisting in forming sport clubs for girls as safe areas where girl-child head of households can participate in sport and develop life skills. These girls are heads of households and have lost their parents to HIV/AIDS, violence or poverty related illnesses leaving the girls at a young age to care for siblings with limited community support. The girls under the wing of EGT have formed themselves into seven netball teams by age groups between 10 and 18 years rather than geographical areas. The girls have one netball coaching session a week and two support group meetings. On Saturdays all the girls meet in Dombotombo for games between the different teams. On Saturdays time is also spent on life skills topics such as basic self-care, reproductive health, cultural and traditional practices, community service and how to work as a team.

## Wadzani Katsande's story

Wadzani is an activist and firm believer in the power of economic empowerment. Her passion is taking action to ensure that developing countries in Africa find appropriate and innovative solutions to combat poverty, debt, poor governance and disease. In 2006 Wadzani founded the Edmund Garwe Trust as a NGO that assists girl head of households through sport and life skills.

Wadzani also act as "support mother" for many girls. One such girl is **Tendai Gambiza** whose story is narrated by Wadzani Katsande. "Tendai Gadzani has three wishes: that the pain in her chest goes away, that she lives long enough to finish school and that she can make enough money to support her family so they don't have to sleep hungry. Tendai Gambiza is 12 years old and lives in Rusike Park, Marondera, Zimbabwe with her aunt. Both of Tendai's parents fell sick and died of HIV/Aids and she is now living with the disease. When Tendai was at netball practice one day at the Edmund Garwe Trust program, the administrator noticed that she was not fit to participate and took time to talk with her. Tendai has since been diagnosed with Tuberculosis and receives treatment.

Tendai is a survivor. She is extremely resilient and intelligent. Her story is particularly heart wrenching because of her overwhelming will to live despite what she has experienced. She says that although she is often too sick to attend class, she makes sure she sits all the exams and is always in the top five. She says school comes easy to her. Tendai is extremely realistic and practical. Her approach to her illness is one of acceptance and fortitude.

Tendai attends the support group and games religiously. When she is feeling ill she does not play but sits and supports the girls. Tendai has become a source of hope and inspiration for the other girls. At the support groups she absorbs all the lessons. As the emphasis of the lessons is constant reinforcement and repetition, Tendai's razor sharp intelligence helps to keep the girls recalling things they have learnt. Tendai is neither loud nor boisterous. In her quiet studious way, she has become a respected member of the team. Tendai leads by example, practicing what she has learnt and reminding the other girls of the life lessons. She represents EGT's basic motto: Live a life of dignity, decorum and diplomacy".

## **Majidah Nantanda (Uganda) – First Female Football Coach of the Ugandan Crested Cranes and TackleAfrica**

Majidah Nantanda was born in Makindye, Kampala in Uganda in 1981 and grew up with five brothers. Majidah describes herself as "soccer-mad" in the 1990s at her school in Kampala, Uganda. She, however, recalls there were two sports rules: "netball for girls and soccer for the boys, so I'd sneak out of netball to watch the boys play" (<http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/08/womens-football-struggles-for-equal-rights-in-uganda/majidah>).

From the age of eight, her brothers realized they had some fierce competition so they introduced her to the neighborhood boys, who Nantanda would play with during her holidays. "My mum never told me you're not supposed to play football", It was her

single mother, a businesswoman, who later bought her a kit and later gave her transport money to go to games (<http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/08/womens-football-struggles-for-equal-rights-in-uganda/majidah>).

Majidah knew in her early teens that she wanted to play football and it never occurred to her that it was a predominantly male sport. In an interview with the Daily Monitor she recalls: "although my mother would at times discipline me and my brothers for playing too much football, she never told me that because you are a girl, you should not play football. Actually I got inspiration from my brothers (four). I used to play with them at home in Makindye. There were days when other boys would refuse to have me (a girl) on their teams but the moment I played, the next day all teams wanted me. They even started making me captain. Nantanda, knew that right midfield was her best position. When girls were called from the different self-styled clubs in Mbale, Entebbe and Kampala to prepare for a friendly against Kenya in 1998, Nantanda, went to the camp. When coach Paul Ssali (Crested Cranes coach then) asked me which position I played", she says, "I told him nsamba musanvu (I play number seven)" Unknown to Nantanda, the right midfield "belonged" to the untouchable Olive Mbekeka, the captain. "The coaches and girls around whispered: 'That one will never play football'". "I eventually missed the final list to Nairobi but Mama Baker (Crested Cranes coordinator then) called me to the side and asked: 'Can't you think of any other number?' I said no. But she told me to continue training and come back after two weeks when the team has returned from Nairobi". Mama Baker played a key role in the development of women football in Uganda and is credited for having started the Kampala Women team. Mbekeka had also sought her out about her preferred position and the skipper had advised Majidah to continue training as she waited for them to return from Nairobi. Majidah did as asked. She was given a role in her preferred position in the return leg, with Mbekeka moving forward (<http://www.monitor.co.ug/Sports/Soccer/-/690266/2641746/-/item/1/-/m18b2kz/-/index.html>).

Majidah made her competitive debut for Uganda in the 1988 Africa Women's Football Championships and missed an opportunity to play professionally. "I had a chance to go

professional. After the game against Egypt here, the Egyptian captain walked to me and put a paper into my hands. It read: 'Come to Fairway Hotel'".

"I was young and I feared. I gave the paper to Olive. Olive and I later went to Fairway and met the Egyptian manager and she told me: 'Majidah, I want to take you to Egypt'. The mistake I made when they asked me who they should contact is 'the federation' (then under the late Dennis Obua). So when I attended the FIFA Symposium in South Africa in 2011, the same Egyptian lady identified me and asked what went wrong. I was shocked when she told me they had asked the federation to send me to Egypt 12 years earlier. On following it up I was told that the federation was reluctant to release me because they feared losing me but I later discovered there could have been a disagreement between my coach (Ssali) and FUFA (Uganda Football Federation) on who should receive transfer money. I confronted coach Ssali and he just kept quiet" (<http://www.monitor.co.ug/Sports/Soccer/-/690266/2641746/-/item/1/-/m18b2kz/-/index.html>).

Majidah Nantanda retired from competitive football in 2007 and now focuses on coaching and empowering girls and women through football. She is a single mother of one and regularly travels across Africa, Europe, the USA doing coaching courses and programs on women sport. "I'm what I am because of my professional football misfortune and because of that Egyptian lady's example. I don't want these girls to go through the same. I'm interested in the growth of the girls beyond football not just dreaming of playing for the national team once in three years. I want to teach them to use football to attain other life's dreams" (<http://www.monitor.co.ug/Sports/Soccer/-/690266/2641746/-/item/1/-/m18b2kz/-/index.html>).

Majidah played for the Women's national football team the Crested Cranes, for 9 years. She then decided to focus on coaching and has since become one of the most qualified football coaches in Uganda completing her Level 1 and first part of her Level 2 FIFA coaching course. She is also currently (since 2011) coaching the female Crested

Cranes as national football coach. The coaching pathway has taken Majidah all the way to the top in football in Uganda with the assistance of TackleAfrica.

## The story of TackleAfrica

According to TackleAfrica, many young people in Africa love football. But their location and their age means they're most at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. This is because Sub-Saharan Africa is home to over 90% of the world's HIV-positive children, and over two thirds of all people living with HIV, live in Sub-Saharan Africa.

TackleAfrica uses the power and popularity of football to deliver HIV education to young people on football pitches across the continent. African coaches are specifically trained to use fun, interactive football drills with the young people in their clubs and communities. Each drill contains a sexual health message about HIV that unfolds as they play. Drills are designed so that young people learn through play, in a way they enjoy, remember and understand. Through the messages in these drills young players are educated and challenged to make safer decisions, limiting the impact of HIV in their families and communities.

TackleAfrica cooperate with African partners across Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia and work closely with a range of organisations, from grassroots community based organisations to international NGOs and government ministries. These partners help to find and develop football coaches in their regions thus allowing TackleAfrica to reach thousands of young Africans every year (<http://tackleafrica.org/what-we-do/>).

Majidah has been involved with TackleAfrica since 2009 and she is delighted to be able to use what she has learnt in the community. Her community work is very important to her: "I have committed to developing a grassroots football programme to empower more girls and women in sports. I am also using and teaching how to use football to address development issues, like health and education in our communities". Taking on so

many different roles does not seem to bother Majidah, who is happy to be able to utilise her experience in many different settings, "I maintain other part time jobs to support my passion for volunteering in the communities".

Majidah is so committed to TackleAfrica and their methods that she agreed to take on a project officer role to help deliver training all over Uganda. Assisting in the delivery of the Level 2 course was just the start for Majidah and TackleAfrica. Now she is able to take her experience in football and her knowledge around HIV to all areas of Uganda, using TackleAfrica's unique methodology to help prevent the spread of HIV.

"Youth are the most vulnerable to this epidemic and they are also the majority involved in sports activities in Uganda. Considering that football is by the most popular sport in Uganda, if more coaches can be trained in how to do HIV/AIDS education, it will have an important impact among the youth. I am grateful to be a part of TackleAfrica Uganda" (<http://tackleafrica.org/latest-news/meet-coach-majidah/>).

Majidah Nantanda says women playing football in Uganda has become more accepted over the past 15 years. Today in this East African country there are at least 64 girls' schools competing in the annual national secondary girls' football championships, and many other women who aspire to be the next Majidah Nantanda.

Majidah started a charity program for girls in Uganda called "Growing the Game for Girls (G3) Programme". This program has helped the feminine gender to have self-belief, improved life style, counselling sessions, access to free education for the talented girls as well as create an updated data base for the national team set-up. Growing the Game for Girls Programme is aimed at marketing the game of football among the girl child across every part of Uganda. Nantanda co-ordinates the "Growing the Game for Girls Programme" with Dan Kiwanuka and Christine Nakibuuka as they also work hand in hand with several volunteers both within and outside the country (<http://www.fufa.co.ug/women-football-youth-programmes-are-a-blessing-she-cranes-coach>).

Majidah Nantanda is currently project officer at TackleAfrica (women in sport), Director at Growing the Game for Girls, coach and instructor at International Sport Connection and the U/20 coach of the Crested Cranes in Uganda.

Majidah has one piece of advice she gives all women, regardless of whether they are rising football stars or not: "Continue with your studies. You won't get paid through football. It's not only about playing for the national team. I want these girls to be better women in the future and not waste their education" (<http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/08/womens-football-struggles-for-equal-rights-in-uganda/majidah>).

CNN African Voices recently released a series about Majidah Nantanda. In addition to sharing about her personal football story, she shares about how she uses football to empower girls through her program called Growing the Game for Girls. There are three videos in her series: 1) Football coach breaks down barriers; 2) Female footballer gets rare opportunity and 3) Ugandan football coach tackles HIV.

Readers of this volume are encouraged to visit the following link to the series to share in the inspirational story of Majidah Nantanda at <http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/03/16/spc-african-voices-majida-nantanda-c.cnn/video/playlists/intl-african-voices/>

## **Participation, role and achievements of women in sport development in Kenya – narrated by Dr Adanje Mwisukha**

Kenya's population stood at 38.6 million as per the last Population and Housing Census of the year 2009. Out of this total population, 19.41 million were women and 19.19 million men. This translates to the proportion 50.28% women and 49.72% men. However, growth in the population has not been stagnant as it has continued to grow in spite of the mortality rate, and is now estimated to stand at 45,941,977 million people. It is important

to note from the official national census of the year 2009 that owing to the slightly higher population of women in Kenya, they stand to fully contribute to national development programmes and activities, including sports, in relatively equal measure with men if they are accorded the necessary supportive and/or conducive environment to do so. The valuable contributions of women and sport in Kenya is narrated below by **Dr Andanje Mwisukha** from the Kenyatta University in Kenya.

In order to ensure promotion and sustenance of equal rights and opportunities for men and women in Kenya, the Constitution of Kenya 2010 makes many provisions that call for women and girls' active participation in the various social, economic, political and cultural affairs in the country. For instance, contrary to the traditional practices that locked out married women from owning property, including land, the current constitution gives such rights. The Bill of Rights, which is one of the key components of the constitution, is important in terms of granting equal rights to all people, male and female alike, without any form of discrimination. To ensure and guarantee women's employment and involvement in leadership in various sectors of the country's economy, the constitution also makes provisions of at least 30% of any such opportunities to be reserved or given to women. All these constitutional provisions also apply to the women and girls' involvement in sports in terms of their active participation and leadership in the various national sports federations, associations and organizations.

It is worthwhile noting that in spite of the current legal and policy framework that strives to avail equal opportunities for men and women, the question and realization of gender parity in sports in Kenya, as the case in many countries of Africa, still remains a thorny issue that requires concerted effort to address. It is against this background that this piece of narrative is presented. Cases of women's participation, role and achievements in sport development in Kenya are presented.

## Performance of Kenya's Women Athletes Viz-a-Viz Men in International Sports Events

Kenya has produced world-class middle and long distance over the years. Indeed there is no other sports discipline that the country has posted excellent performances in international sports competitions other than athletics. The country's female athletes have generally competed on equal footing or even outdone the male athletes in some of the international competitors.

The Table below shows the number of Gold, Silver and Bronze medals won by Kenya's female athletes against those of the male in the IAAF World Championship since 2005.

**Table 4** – Medals Won by Kenya's Female and Male Athletes in World Championship since 2005

CHAMPIONSHIPS	GENDER	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
2013	Female	2 (66.7%)	2 (66.7%)	0 (00.0%)	4 (57.1%)
	Male	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (100%)	3 (42.9%)
	Totals	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	1 (100%)	7 (100%)
2011	Female	3 (42.9%)	3 (50.0%)	3 (75.0%)	9 (52.9%)
	Male	4 (57.1%)	3 (50.0%)	1 (25.0%)	8 (47.1%)
	Total	7 (100%)	6 (100%)	4 (100%)	17 (100%)
2009	Female	2 (50.0%)	2 (40.0%)	1 (50.0%)	5 (45.5%)
	Male	2 (50.0%)	3 (60.0%)	1 (50.0%)	6 (54.5%)
	Total	4(100%)	5 (100%)	2 (100%)	11(100%)
2007	Female	2 (40.0%)	1 (33.3%)	2 (40.0%)	5 (38.5%)
	Male	3 (60.0%)	2 (66.7%)	3 (60.0%)	8 (61.5%)
	Total	5 (100%)	3 (100%)	5 (100%)	13 (100%)
2005	Female	3 (60.0%)	2 (40.0%)	0 (00.0%)	5 (50.0%)
	Male	2 (40.0%)	3 (60.0%)	0 (00.0%)	5 (50.0%)
	Total	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	0 (00.0%)	10(100%)

It is evident from the above Table that Kenya's female athletes won more gold medals in the World Championship of the years 2005 (3 gold medals, 60%) and 2013 (2 gold medals, 66.7%), as well as won equal number of gold medals with the men in the World Championship held in the year 2009. They also brought home more silver medals than men in the year 2013. In terms of the Bronze medals, women superseded the ones for the men in the editions of the championship held in 2011 but had equal number of Bronze medals with the men in the years 2005 and 2009. It is also noteworthy that the total numbers of medals that were won by women in the editions of the 2011 and 2013 World Championship surpassed those of the men and the totals across gender for the 2005 championship were equal.

A further breakdown of the cumulative total numbers of gold, silver and bronze medals won by Kenya's women against those of men in the IAAF World Championship that were held in the period 2005 to 2013 also demonstrates an element of women's prowess and stiff challenge against men. The data relating to this argument is presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 – Cumulative Total Numbers of Gold, Silver and Bronze Won by Women Viz-a-Viz Men (2005 – 2013) at IAAF World Championship**

MEDAL	GENDER	YEAR					
		2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	Totals
Gold	Female	3(60.0%)	2(40.0%)	2(50.0%)	3(42.9%)	2(66.7%)	12(50.00%)
	Male	2(40.0%)	3(60.0%)	2(50.0%)	4(57.1%)	1(33.3%)	12(50.00%)
	Totals	5(100%)	5(100%)	4(100%)	7(100%)	3(100%)	24(100%)
Silver	Female	2(40.4%)	1(33.3%)	2(40.0%)	2(40.0%)	2(66.7%)	9(42.9%)
	Male	3(60.0%)	2(66.7%)	3(60.0%)	3(60.0%)	1(33.3%)	12(57.1%)
	Totals	5(100%)	3(100%)	5(100%)	5(100%)	3(100%)	21(100%)
Bronze	Female	0(0.0%)	2(40.0%)	1(50.0%)	4(100.0%)	0(0.0%)	7(58.30%)
	Male	0(0.0%)	3(60.0%)	1(50.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(100%)	5(41.7%)
	Totals	0(0.0%)	5(100%)	2(100%)	4(100%)	1(100%)	12(100%)

Table 5 shows that the cumulative total number of gold medals won by Kenya's female athletes in the World Athletics Championship (2005 – 2013) was equal to those of the male athletes (12 gold medals, 50%). It is also evident that the cumulative total number of Bronze medals won by women in the same editions of the championship surpassed that of the men, that is women's 7 (58.3%) against men's 5 (41.7%). These are the most excellent performances posted by women in the IAAF World Championship from one single African country in the period under reference.

Kenya made her debut in the Summer Olympic Games in the year 1956, and has consistently participated in every edition of the Games except the editions of the 1976 and 1980 Games due to boycotts relating to international politics. It is significant to note that Kenya's female athletes have made commendable contribution to the country's medal tallies and ranking at the Games over the years. The medals won by the female athletes viz-a-viz the male ones for the past five editions of the Olympic Games are presented in Table 6 below.

**Table 6** – Kenya's Medal Tallies at Olympic Games in Relation to Gender (1996-2013)

EDITION OF THE GAMES	WOMEN	MEN	TOTAL
2012	04(36.36%)	07(63.64%)	11(100%)
2008	05(35.71%)	09(64.29%)	14(100%)
2004	02(28.57%)	05(71.43%)	07(100%)
2000	01(14.29%)	06(85.71%)	07(100%)
1996	01(12.50%)	07(87.50%)	08(100%)
Totals	13(27.70%)	34(72.30%)	47(100%)

It is noteworthy from Table 6 above that Kenyan women's contingents to the Games have won at least one medal and made some contribution to the country's ranking at the Games since 1996. It is also evident that the women's performance in terms of proportions of medal tallies at the Games has maintained a steady upward trend from a proportion of 12.50% medals in 1996 to 36.36% in the Games that were held last in

the year 2012. Given that the women's contribution to the country's medal tallies has continued to increase steadily surpassing half of the medals won by men, the future of Kenya women's participation and performance in the international sports competition is definitely promising and bright. This assertion is bolstered by the opportunities opened up and presented to the women by the various national official legal and policy provisions, as well as due to the apparent renaissance relating to the women's realization of the need to persistently pursue their rights.

## **Women's Participation and Achievements in Sports Education and Research in Kenya**

It is recognized worldwide that sports development is substantially dependent on the quality of sports education and research knowledge that sports managers, technicians and athletes are exposed to. It is also a reality that as countries strive to outdo one another and win against one another in the major international sports events, new methods and technology for uplifting performance in sports have continuously evolved. In order to keep pace with the rest of the world in applying appropriate scientific knowledge and technology in training, coaching and general management of sports, Kenya's institutions of higher learning run various sports-related academic programmes and carry out related research with a view of developing sports in the country. Although the proportions of men involved in sports education and research have slightly surpassed those of women due to the historical background of male domination, the presence of a significant number of women in these fields is worth noting. Table 7 shows the numbers and proportions of women against those of men enrolled in sports-related undergraduate degree programmes in the year 2015 in the five universities that offer such programmes.

**Table 7** – Enrolment of Women and Men in Sports-Related Undergraduate Programmes in Kenya in 2015

UNIVERSITY	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Kenyatta University	306(44.48%)	382(55.52%)	688(100%)
Laikipia University College	03(21.43%)	11(78.57%)	14(100%)
Masinde Muliro University of Science & Technology	18(45.00%)	22(55.00%)	40(100%)
Moi University	19(40.43%)	28(59.57%)	47(100%)
University of Nairobi	50(33.78%)	98(66.22%)	148(100%)
Total	396(42.26%)	541(57.74%)	937(100%)

It is evident from Table 7 above that the difference in proportions of female (42.26%) and male students (57.74%) enrolled in the undergraduate sports-related programmes is fairly narrow. For a country that has witnessed male domination in the field of sports over the years, this relatively large number of female sports students in the Kenyan Universities is a great milestone in sports development. It is even further noted to be an outstanding achievement for the women as this proportions of the female students significantly exceeds the proportion of 30% provided for in the national legal and policy framework.

## Women's Postgraduate Research Output in Sports

One of the key components of postgraduate programmes in the sports-related fields in Kenya is research. The research has generally focused on availing new knowledge and solutions to problems in sports. Table 8 shows the numbers and proportions of women and men who completed their postgraduate research work in sports-related programmes in the local universities in Kenya between 2012 and 2014.

**Table 8** – Women and Men's Postgraduate Sports Research Output in Kenya (2012-2014)

GENDER	YEAR			TOTAL
	2012	2013	2014	
Female	02(50.0%)	02(50.0%)	04(40.0%)	08(42.1%)
Male	03(60.0%)	02(50.0%)	06(60.0%)	11(57.9%)
Total	05(100%)	04(100%)	10(100%)	19(100%)

Although the proportion of male sports researchers surpasses the one for the women in the years 2012 to 2014 as evident in Table 8, the gap between the two is narrow. The most significant observation is that the number of women who completed their postgraduate research in sports in the year 2013 was the same as that of men. On the overall, it is significant to point out that Kenya's women have not been left far behind by men in their contribution to research work in the field of sports; their proportions are far above the proportion of 30% provided for in the country's constitution.

## **Outstanding Cases of Women's Sports Community Service Projects in Kenya**

### **Lornah Kiplagat's High Altitude Training Centre in Kenya**

High Altitude Training (HAT) has become known and recognized worldwide as a strategy for enhancing performance of the middle and long distance runners. High altitude training leads to physiological adaptations in athletes that enable them to excel in competitions at low altitude. It is against this background that efforts have been directed towards establishing High Altitude Training Centres (HATC) in strategic locations within the Rift Valley region of Kenya. One of the most popular and outstanding HATC's was established by one of Kenya's athletic heroines, Lorna Kiplagat. Given the enormous contribution that the Centre has made towards nurturing and developing athletic talent in

the country, it is popularly referred to as "The University of Champions HATC". The HATC is located at an altitude of 2400 metres (8000 ft) above sea level in a place called Iten in Elgeyo-Marakwet County of Kenya.

Lornah Kiplagat, the founder of the HATC is one of the greatest long distance female athletes that Kenya, and by extension, Africa, has produced. She won the World Championships and held World records in the 5 kilometres, 10 miles, 20 kilometres and half marathon races. She won the Los Angeles marathons twice. She was also winner of the Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Osaka marathons, as well as came second in the Chicago Marathon and third in the New York City marathon. She won the World Championship in cross country held in Kenya in 2007. Upon acquiring Dutch citizenship in 2003, she competed for the Netherlands in the Olympic Games of 2004 in Athens, 2008 in Beijing and 2012 in London.

Due to her excellent performance in international athletics competitions, Lorna Kiplagat has won several awards. She was winner of the Millenium Shoe Award from the United Nations. She was also honoured with the Abebe Bikila Award, a yearly honour by the New York Road Runners Club to persons who have made outstanding contribution to long distance running. She was made a special ambassador in the KLM's project that aimed at improving medical care in Africa. She was also honoured with appointment in 2007 as ambassador of the Ministry of Development in the Netherlands.

Due to the ambience and suitable facilities at the Lornah Kiplagat HATC, the Centre not only serves the training needs of hundreds of local athletes but has also continuously attracted hundreds of athletes and sports tourists from many corners of the World. The facilities include tracks, paths and training courses that are proximal to the Centre and maintained by the HATC. The Centre has a fully equipped gymnasium for athletes' fitness training and conditioning. Attached to the gymnasium is a physiotherapy and massage clinic for the athletes. The Centre has accommodation and food service facilities for residential training of athletes. To ensure quality training, coaching and related technical

support for athletes, the HATC is served by trained coaches and trainers. All these facilities, amenities and rich human resource makes the Lornah Kiplagat HATC a very conducive environment for athletic training and destination of choice for many local and foreign athletes. Indeed, the Centre has, and continues, to produce world-class athletes for Kenya, Africa and the rest of the World.

### **The Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation**

Sport is widely recognized as an important vehicle for building peace and creating an environment and opportunities for economic development (LYRAS, 2009; UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE ON SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE, 2003). Sport brings people and makes it possible for them to interact thereby enabling them to understand and appreciate one another, and consequently overcome suspicions and unnecessary tensions (ONYWERA; MWISUKHA, 2001). Sports forums are also considered ideal as for dissemination of information on peace and development activities. It is on the basis of these inherent social attributes of sport that a Kenyan long distance female runner, Tegla Loroupe established the Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation in 2003 that uses sports for peace-building amongst ethnic communities in the North Rift region of Kenya, Southern Sudan, Western Uganda and southern parts of Somalia.

Tegla Loroupe, a world recorder in 20 and 25 kilometer races, World Marathon and three-time World Half-Marathon Champion, hails from the North Rift parts of Kenya where majority of Kenya's middle and distance runners come from. Due to her outstanding achievement in sport at national and international levels, coupled with her initiatives of building peace amongst warring communities in the North Rift Region of Kenya, she was named a United Nations Ambassador of Sport in 2006 by the UN secretary-General. She is also an international Sports Ambassador for the IAAF and UNICEF. In the year 2007, she was named the Oxfam Ambassador of Sport and Peace to Darfur (in the wider Sudan) to assist bring to an end to violence in that region.

The Tegla Loroupe Foundation relies on sponsorships from friends and well-wishers to undertake its peace and development activities through sports intervention. The Foundation organizes annual peace races among the various warring pastoralist ethnic communities within the greater horn of Africa region. The tensions and fighting amongst the communities are triggered by rampant cattle rustling, which is their means of livelihood. However, through the peace races, thousands of warriors are brought together, accorded opportunities to interact and make peace. The foundation has established the reformed warriors rehabilitation and training camp which trains reformed warriors to engage in constructive livelihood production activities (such as farming, bee-keeping, etc), prepares them to take part in a peacemaking process and offers sports training for upcoming athletes. Additionally, the Foundation provides support for education programmes in schools within the North Rift Region. Other than assisting the rural schools in the pastoralists' area with education resources, the Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation has also set up the Tegla Loroupe Peace Academy to serve the education needs of some of the children from the communities.

### **Moving the Goalposts Kilifi (MTG)**

Moving the Goalposts Kilifi (MTG) is a community-based girls' sports organization in Kilifi County of the Coastal region of Kenya that was established in the year 2001. The organization uses football activities as a tool for addressing social, economic and cultural problems faced by girls in the region.

The initial funding for this football-for-girls' welfare and development was received from the British Council, and was established based on the moral support from Moving the Goal-posts UK, a charity organization in Britain. Starting with an initial enrolment of only 120 girls, the organization has attracted more young female football participants over the years to a population size of over 3,000 players by the year 2012. MTG Kilifi organizes football activities, including tournaments all-round the year. These initiatives do not only promote football for girls but also assist the participating female footballers in

terms of developing their fitness and health, acquiring life skills and knowledge as well as emotional support. Specifically, the organization avails opportunities and forums for the female footballers to be sensitized and educated on matters of reproductive health and HIV-AIDS prevention, poverty alleviation, abstinence from drug abuse, safer and fulfilling relationships, as well as rights for the girl-child.

The seminars and workshops that are organized for the football girls by MTG inculcate in them knowledge on life skills such as leadership, confidence and self-esteem. The organization also avails opportunities for access to education, leadership training as well as employment and self-employment for the female footballers. The organization has therefore, made enormous contribution to the welfare of girls in Kenya.

The history of sports in Kenya, as the case in many African countries, has revealed gender imbalance in favour of men against women. However, insights and rigorous analysis of sports activities, role and contribution of women in the field have revealed and exposed areas in which women have either excelled, surpassed men or participated with them on equal footing. The proactive role of women in some of the areas of sports development demonstrates an upward trend which is potentially healthy and beneficial to both genders.

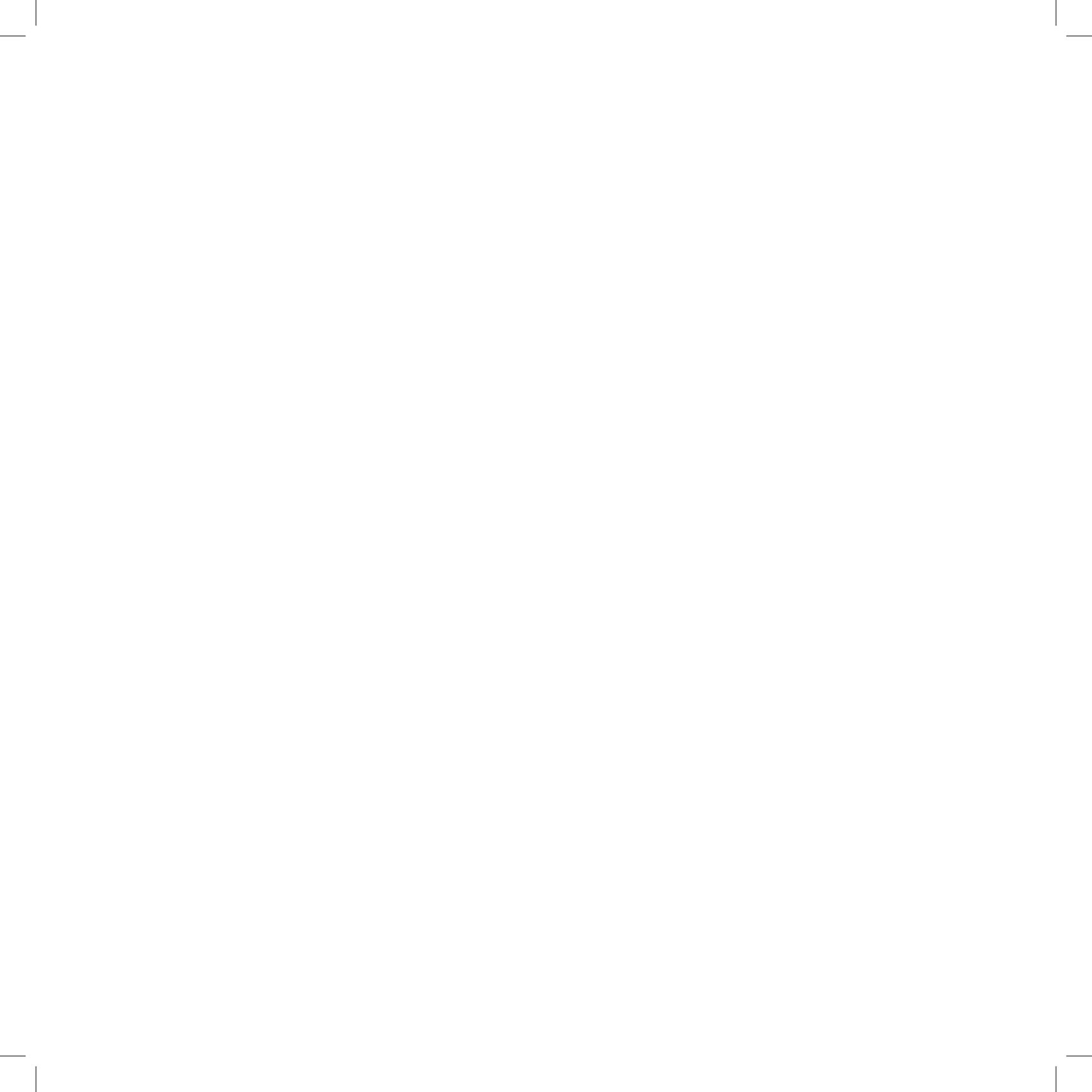
## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the work and legacies of local sport development workers in African communities were narrated. Their work is embedded within different sport-for-development organizations in Africa. Although their circumstances and resources differ, they all have to challenge existing male dominated sport structures in their countries. The golden thread through these stories of inspiring women is the firm belief that participation in sport can make a difference in the lives of girls and young women on and off the playing fields. The chapter focused on selected sport-for-development organizations

and trailblazing Africa women operating within these organizations. Of course there are many more that can fill the pages of this volume like the women involved in the Zambian NOWSPAR or Kids Play International in Western Africa. Readers are urged to support all organizations that focus on impacting the lives of girls and women through sport in Africa.

6

**FEMALE SPORT  
LEADERS IN  
AFRICA**



# INTRODUCTION

In an article on Women's sport leadership in Malawi, Goslin and Kluka (2014) stated that the significance and need for women to be involved in decision-making and leadership in Africa is a well-debated issue as can be seen from an online discussion (United Nations, 2007) organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. What emerged from this discussion was the importance of women's involvement in societal decision making. Contributors emphasized that without the active involvement of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels and spheres of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. Women in leadership roles are more likely to represent the needs and interests of other women and act as role models to the next generations of girls and boys in African society. Gender inequality in Africa's regional and national sport organizations and governance structures is a reality. Females remain marginal in decision making in sport contexts despite ratio guidelines from international sport governing bodies and governments. Gender inequality in sport leadership is, however, not uniquely African. It is a global phenomenon that continuously receives attention on global and regional platforms.

Gender inequality in Africa's regional and national sport organizations and governance structures is a reality. Females remain marginal in decision making in sport contexts despite ratio guidelines from international sport governing bodies and governments. Gender inequality in sport leadership is, however, not uniquely African. It is a global phenomenon that continuously receives attention on global and regional platforms.

According to the 2014 update of the Factsheet on Women in the Olympic Movement ([www.ioc.org](http://www.ioc.org)) the percentage of female leadership in National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and the IOC remains low. In order to address this situation the IOC advocated that 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, especially in executive and legislative positions within their structures by 2005. This objective was, however, not achieved. The IOC's first objective (having at least 10% of women in decision-making positions by December 2000) was nevertheless met by more than 61% of NOCs and 52% of IFs in 2014. As of May 2014, 24 women are active IOC members out of 106 (around 22.6%). Four women are honorary members. The first female sport leader from Africa to be elected onto the IOC executive Board was Olympic champion **Nawal El Moutawakel** from Morocco (her story was narrated earlier in this volume) who 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%) were members of the IOC Executive Board: **Nawal El Moutawakel**, Gunilla Lindberg, Claudia Bokel and Anita L. DeFrantz. **Lydia Nsekera** from Burundi is currently chairing the IOC Women and Sport Commission. Her story will be shared below. A number of extra-ordinary women sit on African National Olympic Committees affiliated to the IOC. The stories of **Meriem Cherni Mizounie** (Tunisia), **Flora Mwandira** (Malawi) and **Eugenia Chidhakwa** (Zimbabwe) as examples of female sport leaders in Africa are also imparted in this chapter. The story of **Aya Medany (Egypt)** as 2014 recipient of the IOC Women and Sport Trophy for the continent of Africa will also be conveyed.

## **Lydia Nsekera (Burundi) – First elected women on FIFA's executive committee and Chair of IOC Women and Sport Commission**

Lydia Nsekera of Burundi entered the history books of African soccer leadership and of world soccer when she became the first woman in FIFA's 110 year history to be elected to FIFA's powerful executive committee. As President of the Burundi Football Association, Lydia will serve a four-year term, on the executive committee. Her leadership potential and influence has been noticed earlier already when she was co-opted to FIFA's executive committee as interim post-holder since 2012.

According to an interview with Lydia published on <http://www.africatopsuccess.com/en/2014/02/20/lydia-nsekera-the-burundian-soccer-princess-who-conquered-fifa/> she was born in Burundi on 20 April 1967. She is the daughter of a former president of a local soccer club and comes from one of the royal families of Burundi. Although she was exposed to sport leadership positions through her father's involvement in local soccer she says "I have never play soccer, but I always lay inside. In the 1970s, my father was owner of a small club. Every weekend, players came home for gathering of before match. Then I followed them to the stadium".

She has been managing Burundian soccer since 2004. She was born with a passion for soccer. At the age of 6, she already followed her father to the soccer stadium. At the age of 39, she managed an automobile garage where she employed about twenty people before devoting herself to soccer. Burundians are proud of her. She restored the image of Burundian Federation of Football (BFF), gained the trust of the members and took various initiatives, in particular in favor of feminine soccer.

I especially got the right to minimize problems, to eradicate the endemic corruption in the system, which even destroyed national competitions. There was no more championship. We need to restart everything. [...] Everybody plays soccer in the country. But unfortunately, we do not almost exist; we do not have financial means to do it. We have never participated in the African Cup of Nations; our visibility is almost at zero.

Lydia has always been courageous. She was early a widow, and she is raising her two boys alone. Her husband died of cancer in 2003. She became a widow with two boys, one of whom Stéphane suffers from a trisomy 21. Her dedication to both soccer and her family shines through in her statement: "I work in the garage and I help children to do their homework. I also have a desk at home. Weekends are reserved for soccer and for the family. My two boys like soccer". Lydia Nsekera wanted Burundian women to attend

football matches free of charge. As a result, this sport is very appreciated by women for that reason.

Till today, I never sign anything if there is no feminine sector in what they propose to me". She thinks that: "Feminine soccer has to develop in the same way as male soccer and in all domains: refereeing, training, administration, governance, status of the player and marketing. Simultaneously, it must be protected from drift, as cheating.

After her election to FIFA's executive committee, an interview with her was published on the webpage of FIFA. What follows below is an excerpt of her pre-election reaction ([www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)).

**How did you react to the FIFA President's proposal in 2011 to have a woman on the FIFA Executive Committee?**

"I was delighted. I said to myself that this would be good for the development of women's football and the decision would encourage women to work harder and to fill senior positions in member associations".

**If you were elected, how would you see your role?**

"At Executive Committee level, as someone who is a woman and a mother bringing up her children, I would suggest some ideas for developing women's football – particularly at grassroots level. Outside of the Executive Committee, I would try to convince the presidents of the member associations to develop women's football and to give women decision-making powers and support".

**What is your vision for women's football?**

"Women's football must develop in the same way as the men's game and in all areas such as refereeing, training, administration, governance, players' status and marketing. At the same time, any flaws like cheating must be avoided in the women's game".

**We'd like to ask you some personal questions based on the 'Proust Questionnaire' so that we can find out more about you. What is your favourite motto?**

"Do well".

**Who is your favourite heroine of all time?**

"Margaret Thatcher".

**And in football?**

"Pia Sundhage".

**Which match will you always remember?**

"The CECAFA (*The Council for East and Central Africa Football Associations, a regional association affiliated to the Confederation of African Football*)" U-17 final between Burundi and Uganda on 26 August 2007 in Burundi. Burundi won the regional cup and the Burundi people were overjoyed. On that day, the Burundians forgot the ten years of civil war, which had started in October 1993".

**What is your favourite word?**

"Family".

### **The word that you hate the most?**

"Discrimination".

### **This interview will be published to coincide with International Women's Day on 8 March, 2013. Is this day important to you?**

"Yes, it's is very important to me. On 8 March every year, men and women should remember that in our communities, women have rights and obligations at a social, economic and political level".

Lydia has been President of the Burundi FA since 2004 and also a member of the Committee for Women's Football and the FIFA Women's World Cup™, the Organising Committee for the Olympic Football Tournaments and the International Olympic Committee. Lydia obtained a degree in Economic and Administrative Sciences from the University of Burundi in 1992. She actively participated in basketball and athletics (high jump). Her involvement in sport leadership and sport administration spans from 2001 to date. Her sport leadership career started as a leader of a women's football club (2001- ); President of the Burundi Football Federation (2004-2013); Member of the Burundi National Olympic Committee (NOC) Women and Sport Commission (2001-2006); Member of the Organising Committee of the 5th African women's football championships (2006); Member of the Burundi NOC Executive Bureau (2006- ); Member of the Organising Committee of the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) Olympic Football Tournaments (2006- ); Member of the Women's Football Commission of the African Football Confederation (CAF) (2006-2012); Member of the Executive Committee of the Council of East and Central Africa Football Associations (2007-2011); Member of the Organising Committee of the Olympic football tournaments in Beijing (2008); Member of the Organising Committee of the FIFA World Cup, Chile (2008); Member (2011-2013), then President (2013- ) of the Women's Football and the FIFA Women's World Cup Commission; co-opted (2012) then elected (2013) by the FIFA

Congress as FIFA Executive Committee Member; Member of the Executive Committee of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) (2014-) ([www.olympic.org](http://www.olympic.org)).

Lydia Nsekera has served on the IOC as a member from 2010-2014 and on the following IOC's Commissions: Radio and Television (2011-2014), Marketing (2014- ), Coordination for the Games of the XXXII Olympiad, Tokyo 2020 (2013- ). In her career she also won the IOC Women and Sport Award in 2009 and is currently the Chairperson of the International Olympic Committee (IOC's) Women and Sport Commission (2014- ) – the first African woman to achieve this position.

The following words of Lydia Nsekera will without doubt inspire the girls and women of Africa in terms of opportunities in and access to sport and physical activity: "I will inspire women to believe they can lead and I will support women in member associations. I am very happy to be the first woman elected. It is important for Africa, it is important for Burundi, it is important for women. In the executive committee (FIFA) we work as a team, but personally I will carry on working in order to have more women as coaches in grassroots football. I will push for more women to be elected and ask parents to let their daughters play football" (<http://www.bbc.com/sport/0/football/22733072>).

## **Meriem Cherni Mizounie (Tunisia) – 2014 Recipient of the IOC Women and Sport World Trophy**

The IOC Women and Sport Awards were created in 2000 and shines a light on true role models and change makers in the pursuit of gender equality in sport globally as well as on each continent. For the selection of the winners, the IOC invites each NOC, IF and Continental Association to submit nominees that could include women, men and organisations who have made remarkable contributions to the development, encouragement and reinforcement of women's participation in sport, coaching or in the

administrative and decision-making structures of sport. Nominees are reviewed by an IOC jury composed of members of the Women and Sport Commission. The IOC assists in offering partnership opportunities to these award winners by funding new initiatives that they will introduce at national, regional or continental levels, aimed at further promoting women through sport.

In 2014 **Meriem Cherni Mizouni** from Tunisia was awarded the IOC Women and Sport World Trophy from 39 nominees for her inspirational leadership and dedicated efforts to the improvement of the quality of life of girls and women through sport. On receipt of her World Trophy Meriem remarked as follows: "This is the greatest reward for a whole life devoted to sport" (<http://www.olympic.org/news/meriem-cherni-mizouni-this-is-the-greatest-reward-for-a-whole-life-devoted-to-sport/242127>). Meriem Cherni Mizouni was Tunisia's first female Olympian when she competed in the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games in the swimming events. She is now Secretary of State for Sport and Chairwoman of the Tunisian Olympic Committee (CNOT)'s Women and Sport Commission. Her consistent advocacy for women and sport surely shines through in the interview with the IOC after receiving the IOC Women and Sport World Trophy in December 2014 (<http://www.olympic.org/news/meriem-cherni-mizouni-this-is-the-greatest-reward-for-a-whole-life-devoted-to-sport/242127>).

### **What does this Trophy represent for you?**

"A great moment of emotion and pride. This is the greatest reward for a whole life devoted to sport. I am especially proud for my country, Tunisia, which since achieving independence has never stopped striving for progress, openness and tolerance. Proud too for Tunisian women, who over time have become a symbol for the struggle against hatred, violence, fanaticism and obscurantism. Proud for my NOC, which is resolutely engaged in supporting the Olympic values. Proud for the Women and Sport Commission, and for all the sports men and women in Tunisia. It is to them that I dedicate this award,

with a special mention for Tunisian women, who have been and continue to be actively involved in the development of Tunisia and the triumph of peace in our country”.

**What impact will this award have for your continuing work to promote women in the world of sport?**

“I hope that this award will allow more women of all ages and social levels to have greater access to sport through the 'Women's Olympic Caravan' project. After the success of two big events, the 'Women's Sports Night' (2012) and the 'Women's Sports Festival' (2014), and in response to the request from several cities and women's associations, the Women and Sport Commission is proposing to run this initiative throughout 2015, with one event each month for several regions of the country, essentially the most disadvantaged ones with the lowest level of women's sports participation. The programme will cover 12 cities in the country. Women's clubs, schools and the general public will be the main target groups. At the same time, this award will allow us to work on mapping the situation of women's sport in Tunisia and the programmes to be developed”.

**Why is there a need for this mapping?**

“There are many different players in the field of women and sport: universities, sports clubs, ministries, the CNOT, etc.; but at the moment, we have no country-wide data to allow us to say exactly how, when and where Tunisian women practise sport. The goal is thus to identify and inventory how women practise sport, define their strengths and weaknesses, and propose a development plan”.

**What first got you interested in sport, and particularly working for the cause of women in sport?**

“I owe my vocation and my whole career to my father, who was himself a swimming coach. It was he who got me into the pool at the age of four and taught me to swim. At

the time, the leader of my country was encouraging the emancipation of women. So I was proud to be one of those who represented this equality between boys and girls that was being encouraged. I gradually became committed to making greater sports participation by women a cause of my own. Even more so when I became national champion. I wanted all the girls in Tunisia to experience the joy of standing on the podium and seeing their national flag raised at international sports events. Since then, I have never stopped working for this, through all the positions of responsibility I have held, from coach and trainer to leader, international swimming judge, Chairwoman of the CNOT Women and Sport Commission and then Secretary of State for Sport".

### **What is your message for this new generation of young men and women?**

"My message is an appeal to everyone, young and old, male and female, to get involved in sport; to practise it every day; to encourage those around them to practise it; and to take on board the noble values it transmits. It is the best promoter of the values of friendship and solidarity. It guarantees a tolerant and peaceful world. We should all support the efforts being made jointly by the IOC and the UN to make sport a vehicle for development and peace".

Thanks to her dynamism and commitment **Meriem Cherni Mizouni** has set up various initiatives to increase the presence of women within administrative and decision-making structures in Tunisian sport. For example, since 2012, the country's national sports federations have been required to employ female technical advisers to be responsible for the development of women's sport. She also created the "Women's Sport Night", which now attracts thousands of girls and women in all regions of Tunisia.

## Flora Mwandira (Malawi) – First Female Chef de Mission of Malawi to the Olympic Games and Vice President of the Malawi Olympic Committee



Flora Mwandira, First female Chef de Mission of the Malawi Olympic Team to the Summer Olympic Games, Executive member of FAM and vice president of the Malawi Olympic Committee.

Malawi is a land-locked African country that takes part in the Summer Olympic Games. Female leadership in Malawi sport is emerging due to the vision and support of the Malawi National Council of Sport (MNCS) as well as the drive and ambition of female sport leaders like **Flora Mwandira**. Flora's influence and competency as a female sport leader in Malawi as well as in Africa are evident from her narrative presented below.

"I am Mrs Flora Mwandira, a secondary school Physical Education and Biology teacher by profession. In sports, I am currently an Executive Member of the Football Association of Malawi (FAM) since 2001. I am also the Vice President of the Malawi Olympic Committee (MOC) since 2010 and a member of the Confederation of Southern Africa Football Association (COSAFA) Women's Football Organising Committee since 2004. I have served as a CAF/ FIFA Women's Football Commissioner since 2007. I am Malawi Olympic Committee National Course Director for the IOC Sports Administration and Management Courses since 2007 and have been a representative of Malawi in Women and Sport Commission to Africa Region 5 from 2009 to 2013.

I am one of the first few Malawian women who took the challenge to study Physical Education and School Sport, Sports Science and Business Management with the

University of Pretoria in coordination with Malawi National Sports Council and qualified with an Advanced Certificate in Sport Business Management in 2012. In addition I have done a Diploma in Advanced Sports Management and Administration with IOC and the FIFA Futuro III Football Administration and Management Instructors in Zurich.

Malawi Government has put in place a National Sports Policy whose overall goal is to promote and popularise Physical Education and Sport for all, accompanied by guidelines for its implementation which provide details of ways in solving problems that inhibit sports development efforts and promotion of sports awareness in Malawi, down to grassroots levels. The aim of the policy advocacy for sport and Physical Education for girls and women in Malawi is to promote mass awareness on the importance of general fitness, health, recreation and leisure for all Malawian citizens through sports and to provide and promote access to sport for persons with disability, the aged, women and children.

Within this policy context I focus on an increase in women participation in sports and create opportunities for girls and women to develop social connections with peers and mentors, assume leadership roles and grow physically, emotionally, and socially through sports, for quality performance in sports administration, referee and the athlete competitions at all levels. This goal is achieved through awareness campaigns organised when holding workshops for the Women and Sport Commission of Malawi where women from sports associations are invited as well as community members and other stakeholders.

I firmly believe that to develop leadership amongst women in Malawi sport is all about courage and encouragement. Teachers own the grassroots sports and they need to get involved practically. I provide sport leadership from the classroom. Students and fellow teachers, who created their own goals out of interest, have grown with it and are a testimony to their achievements. We have so many teachers who have the interest and have grown quite big in sports administration. I have been a mentor who has led students in career selection so that many have opted to become sports and physical education

teachers. Through experience, I have noted that one needs to be strong and confident, have self-respect and respect for others, a good listener, trustworthy, fair and straight up.

I got involved in football since the inception of Women's Football in Malawi in 1998. I was one of the women in the founding Women's Football Committee; the Blantyre Women's Football Committee as a Treasurer. In 1999 I was elected the first General Secretary of the first National Women's Football Committee. In 2001, I was elected as the President of the committee and sat as an Executive Committee Member of FAM. In 2004, I was elected in the FAM Executive and the first woman elected executive member. I served for my second term as an elected FAM Executive Member from 2007- 2011 and am currently serving as a co-opted member for the term 2011 - 2015.

My 14 years' experience in sports administration has been good. I would say that I contributed to the growth of FAM. I have received support from the FAM Executive and affiliates where I faced challenges in pursuing moving women's football forward as I remained the only female throughout in the board. I can sincerely say that I am instrumental in the progress of women's football while I have on the Board of FAM. Women's Football administration in Malawi has increased threefold in terms of the numbers of participants, female FIFA/ CAF Referees, instructors and commissioners produced. Currently I am one of the two commissioners. Women have not been left behind. In football which is a male dominated sport in Malawi, we also have one female coach with a CAF "B" Coaching Licence now pursuing CAF "A" Licence which is the highest CAF offers. The other female coach has CAF "C" and will be doing CAF "B".

As a female sport leader, I have managed to work very well amongst my colleagues because of the respect that I have for myself and those that I work with. Of course transparency and accountability have been paramount; commitment and no gossip has made me function very well in FAM Executive Board. I have been part to the formation of Women's Football National Team which was formed in 2002 under the sponsorship of

BP which is now Puma and participated in COSAFA in 2002, 2006 and 2011. The Malawi Women's Football team also participated in CAF Competitions in 2004.

At FAM level, I have been part to the qualification of the Malawi National Team (The FLAMES) to AFCON in 2010 and looking forward to the next qualification. I have been part to the introduction of the FIFA Goal Project 1, 2, 3 and 4 which has brought the development of the Kamuzu Stadium to an artificial turf, the development of Chiwembe Technical Centre, and the Luwingu Technical Centre in Mzuzu. I have seen the growth of the part time FAM Secretariat to full-time staff and the engagement in sports business in FAM. I have also supported the formation of Beach Soccer which has started with a bang during the recent COSAFA Competition.

I have personally developed myself by attending different courses, my appointment in COSAFA Women's Football Organizing Committee, CAF/FIFA Women's Football Commissioner, FIFA Future Football Administrator and as an elected Vice President of Malawi Olympic Committee and also as a Chairperson of the Women and Sport Commission of Malawi and Representative of Women and Sport Commission in Zone VI which is now AU Region 5 for Sport Development. I have advocated for an increase in women participation at all areas through Women and Sport Awareness Forums. As a result we now have more women participating in different sports and most sports associations have at least 20% women representation.

My overall contribution to football has been the introduction of women's football in Malawian in 1998 alongside my predecessor Mrs Ennie Mphande who was the founding president and I was the founding General Secretary. I have contributed in football administration as a FIFA Futuro III Football Instructor for FAM Affiliates. I have chaired the committee which organized the opening of the milestone Goal Project 1 – Chiwembe Technical Centre. I have Represented FAM in the COSAFA Women's Organizing Committee and share ideas from COSAFA that since Malawi's last participation, Malawi took position 4. I have organised Awareness campaigns for HIV and Gender in sports for Women's

Football administrators and the Media through UNICEF programs with the idea of keeping the girls remain in school while playing football. Most of the girls we started with are still around playing or becoming coaches so as to create pathways for the athletes and role models for girls in the community.

As a female Executive Member, I have represented FAM twice at FIFA Congress and twice at FIFA Women's Football Symposium and as Head of Delegation. Through my insistence and progressive way of doing things, I have built courage and self-esteem in most women as they perceive me as a role model of achievement and leadership in sport. More Malawian women are now able to participate in male dominated committees and sports courses. I have been the only female commissioner for CAF/FIFA Women's Football Competition, but now Malawi has two; me and Ella Banda, we can see some growth. I have encouraged women to take leadership positions; women are able and confident to challenge males on elections.

I have seen more Malawian female football referees emerge and some have done very well at international levels. Bernadetta Kwimbira, for example, has risen to world class standard and has several times officiated in world competitions in China one and in Canada. Grace Msiska and Maggie Chombo Sadick are other examples of emerging women's football female coaches. Maggie Chombo Sadick can be regarded as the pioneer of women's football players turning coach. and running a women's football club and is also a CAF "B" Licence Coach. She is currently doing the CAF "A" Licence. Keren Chaula is the only female Coaching Instructor and is attending CAF "A" Licence and started assisting Polytechnic Women's Football Club before attending a FAM "C" Licence in 2010. In 2011, she attended the FIFA 11 for Health Instructors Course. She is now the Assistant to the Country Director for FIFA 11 for Health Football Program and attended the New Anglophone Instructors Course in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia in 2012.

In the Malawi Olympic Committee, I am serving my second term as Vice President. I have encouraged women in associations to have self-esteem and participate in the

male dominated sports committees. If we are to bring about gender equality in sports; the change should begin with us. My other contribution is my appointment as the Chef de Mission for London 2012 Olympic Games and the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games which I hope was a success. I have again been appointed as Chef de Mission for Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, which is another milestone for a female Chef de Mission. I was also privileged to attend the 6th IWG World Conference on Women and Sport in Helsinki, Finland in June, 2014 where I obtained a lot more information which I need to lead and share with the women of Malawi and other stakeholders in Africa.



Eugenia Chidhakwa (Zimbabwe), Anita De Frantz (USA) and Flora Mwandira (Malawi) at the 2014 IWG Congress in Helsinki, Finland.

As Commissioner for Women and Sport, I have organized seminars for women in sports and advocated for gender equality in sports alongside my fellow commissioners to allow more women participation in sport in different associations so that the women can have a voice and slowly bring about the change which comes with time.

My advocacy for gender equality in Malawi sport is not limited to leadership positions. I also utilize a sport-for-development approach through Play Soccer Malawi to advocate quality of life for all. Play Soccer Malawi is a registered non-profit organization without political or religious affiliation. It is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors. Play

for Fun and Learn for Life is also an independent affiliate within the PLAY SOCCER non-profit International (PSNI) Network of organizations in Africa and the USA that share and operate the internationally recognized, Play Soccer Malawi currently operates in Ndirande at Makata Primary School which is a high density area and also has other centres in Bangwe. In 2014, its program involved 400 children and 25 volunteer youth instructors. In Play Soccer Malawi we use the unique power of football as a fun school of life that helps children become successful life players who build healthy, thriving communities. We want to enable Malawian children and youth to become masters of their health, education and success. As self-determined individuals they will possess the knowledge and skills to stay healthy and lead productive lives. As uncompromising team players they effect meaningful change within their communities to build a better and healthier future.

The children have Play Soccer programs after normal school classes where they are gathered according to the age groups regardless of gender. They are given football and life skills lessons through the volunteers who are trained with the football coaching skills as a recreational vehicle to develop them as players who love the game of football, have the knowledge and life skills to lead healthy productive lives, and engage through sport as agents of positive change in their communities.

The program has assisted children and the youth to keep busy and prevented from indulging in negative behaviour that can make them to contract HIV and AIDS and drug abuse. The communities where the program is offered have benefitted a lot in terms of social-economic resources through projects such as boreholes which have been drilled to reduce the water problems in the area.

Despite all my achievements and joys I have experienced through my involvement in sport, there are still challenges that need to be addressed if we want to reach gender equality in sport. Some of these challenges include negative remarks when women do not do well in their competitions; financial problems preventing women to commit

to participating in sport; discouragement for the female referees who officiate at men's football matches; minimal sponsorship for women sports and cultural barriers in some areas slowing down the increase in women participation in sports.

Although we face challenges to achieve gender equality in Malawi sport, we as the sport leadership are positive and continuously investigate ways in which to reach our goals. Some of the recommendations include encouraging women holding positions in sports to work together to uplift those aspiring to leadership positions; keeping transparency and accountability paramount in order for women to have improved support; continued sensitization to reach the grassroots so that sports participation becomes a reality for all to give room for identifying more talent and encouraging female sports managers to identify required personal skills and use them to determine their competency and capitalize on that competency to enjoy doing their job and in the process create a friendly environment where everybody can learn from them and also enjoy working with them.

My story and successes in Malawi sport is not the only success story. Malawi has many other inspirational female sport stars and leaders. It is not possible to name everyone but I would like to highlight the achievements of a few women to serve as inspiration for others.

Mwai Kumwenda was an outstanding netball player at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in in the Malawi National Netball Team (the Queens). She had risen so fast at the national level and became a professional player who has played in Australia and is now playing in New Zealand, doing very well. Mary Waya who was a netball player is now a qualified coach for netball and she coaches the Queens. Mary Waya is an icon in women's sport in Malawi because of being a longest serving national player and the tactics she had in netball. She was a player/coach and attended high level courses in Africa and Europe. She later stopped playing and concentrated on coaching. She has coached the Tanzania National Team before she was contracted as head coach of the Queens. She maintained the Queens in the position 1 in Africa and position 5 in the world. She

holds Netball Clinic in selected districts in the country sponsored by Old Mutual Malawi. In women's football we have Maggie Chombo Sadick who played women's football for 15 years since its inception in Malawi. She later owned a team called Owinging Maggie Chombo Football Academy. She later became a women's football player/ coach and was encouraged to follow the player path way and obtained CAF "C" Licence and later a CAF "B" Licence and now she is attending CAF "A" Licence. She has been our model since because of her consistence and progress. She is happily married to Mr Sadick Malinga who supports her to sponsor her club now called Blantyre Zero, also known as Atu Ladies, which is one of the two best female football clubs in Malawi. She has three children, the first are twins and the second is another girl. One of the twins is like her mother already we see another future star in her and Blantyre Zero is also known as Atu Ladies. Naomie Chinatu is another inspiring female sports manager and has been with Malawi Olympic Committee for many years organising major events and developing herself in the process. She started as a secretary for the MOC Secretariat but now she is a full manager. She has worked on secondment with other National Olympic Committees and left a mark. Charity Mabvumbe has been the only female the FAM Secretariat, who started as a secretary but now is Assistant Administration Manager and completed the Advanced Certificate in Sports Business Management with the University of Pretoria coordinated by Malawi National Sports Council and is to graduate in July, 2014".

## RUTH KENANI MZENGO (Malawi) – Sport development manager in the Malawi National Council of Sport



Ruth Kenani Mzenzo, Sport development manager in the Malawi National Council of Sport.

The Malawi National Council of Sport is an example of a national sport body in sub-Saharan Africa that empowers women through sport leadership. Ruth Kenani Mzenzo started off in the field of Economics but her love for sport and physical activity pushed her towards involvement in sport leadership with a passion for creating opportunities for all Malawian girls to experience the joy of movement. She shares her journey from childhood to professional sport leadership in Malawi below.

I was born and raised in Malawi where I have lived all my life. I attended Chancellor College one of the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi, where I majored in Economics and graduated in 1997. Living in Malawi has provided me with opportunities to grow and develop and appreciate my people and culture better, both in my personal and professional life. As a child growing up, I was fortunate as most Malawian children, to have had opportunity to attend school. I did not have an opportunity to go to kindergarten school though. I went to two public schools during my primary school days. After primary school I was one of the fortunate Malawian children to attend a well-regarded, private boarding High school, the Kamuzu Academy, then also well known as “the Eton of Africa”.

The school, a mixed one, professed a strong educational and ethical philosophy that has remained and will always remain with me throughout my life. It is this foundation, along with the continued support of my family, teachers and friends that has allowed me to embrace my dream of being a significant personality in sport in Malawi today.

The year 1997, my graduation year, was the best year of my life. In this year, I successfully completed my Bachelor of Social Sciences degree in Economics at the University of Malawi and subsequently in 2007 and 2012, I completed a Certificate and Advanced Certificate in Sport Business Management with University of Pretoria and respectively also completed a Masters Degree in Sport Development in 2012 at the University of Gloucestershire in the United Kingdom. I married my husband in September 1999 in Malawi, with full attendance by my family and friends, most of who were from sports. It was one of the most important events in my life. A short time later, in July 2002, I took on another important role in my life- I became a mother. The birth of my daughter was a turning point in my life. Because of my passion and love for sport, I made a conscious decision that it was in her best interest that I introduce her to sport as early as possible and support and help her develop her sport talent to the highest level possible. I had this strong passion to develop her into an Olympic standard athlete and I, therefore, named my daughter, Olympia.

Because I had a child of my own to nurture and care for, I became more aware of children who do not have the support and nurturing they need to realize their full potential. This created in me great passion for children and lit the flame of desire to focus harder on sport as a career. I am also an IAAF level 4 coach and lecturer in Kids Athletics.



Opportunities for girls in the sports programmes of the Malawi National Council of Sport.

I was at the time working for the Department of Income Tax in Malawi as a temporary Tax Inspector, in the Ministry of Finance. Chances of me getting a good permanent job in the department were very good as I had a good Economics Degree. However, because my heart was in sport, I eventually moved and joined the Malawi National Council of Sport, in 2000 as a Sport Development Officer. I am still working with the Council but now as a Sport Development Manager and I am the only lady member of management team. One of my key responsibilities is to drive the development and promotion of women sport in the country.

My future plan, when I am done with formal employment, is to secure a place, develop it into a Fitness and Health Centre for all age groups and continue with my dream of helping my country to develop future national and international standard athletes. It is in fact my hope that with the help and support of my country, I can continue to develop myself into a sport woman and leader who young people particularly girls, including my two daughters, can look up to, someone they can trust, and who will always be willing to go the extra mile to ensure their success in sports and life in general.

Women may be neglected in a society or be deemed not that influential. But the fact remains, however, that the global world is becoming dynamic with women now

taking up influential and challenging top notch jobs and roles in the society. According to 2014 Forbes compilation, there are powerful women figures and heads of state such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel that run nations with a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$11.1 trillion for combined population of up to 641 million people. Although women, however, have swiftly proved to the world that they are able to be on equal footing with men in executing some duties, there are still other sectors in society that are predominantly male dominated. It is a fact that we live in a chauvinistic world where women are marginalized and belittled.

Narrowing down to Malawi, the country is no exception as very few women are currently practicing and participating in sport to the expected level for various reasons. I believe that in Malawi, women in sport are very few because among other reasons the sport sector is perceived as a male domain. Furthermore, it is generally not easy to progress in this sector as there are not many career path opportunities and it is particularly even more challenging for women given the chauvinistic societal way of life in Malawi. However, I am optimistic that this trend, which I perceive as pathetic, can be reversed through a lot of publicity in communities, schools and everywhere of messages that encourage girls/women to fully participate actively in sport.

On the one hand, I put the blame on the government and development partners for creating a situation where men outnumber women in the field. These agencies need to create deliberate programmes aimed at promoting and increasing women participation in sport. The low number of women in decision making positions in the field is glaring. Some of the reasons that have contributed to the situation include the following:

- Malawi is generally not a sporting nation. Therefore a lot of effort and hard work is needed to get people in general and especially women to participate in sport.
- There are no incentives to encourage outstanding sports women and /or men for that matter.

- Sport is not taught in schools.
- Although Physical Education (PE) exists in the school curriculum and time tables, actual implementation is lacking.
- Physical Education is not an examinable or mandatory subject in Malawi schools
- Universities do not offer any degree courses in sport.

Despite the current situation subsisting in Malawi, women in Malawi have contributed a lot to Malawi Sport as coaches, athletes, administrators although their numbers could be bigger. In my opinion as a sport woman, women have a great advantage as sport leaders in that they attach an emotional element/component when handling sport issues because by their nature women are culturally more in touch with the social side of people, an attribute which I believe is critical in leadership. There is need to develop a gender policy and guideline to facilitate the integration of gender into sport development. Female sport can play a critical role in contributing to global economies especially in developing countries.

Due to my passion and love for sport and my active life, I happen to be good at what I did and was doing well in many sporting activities. As a result, I started taking up leadership roles and experiencing leadership roles in sport while still young and in high school. Apart from being appointed school prefect and chapel monitor, I was also made captain for my school house and hockey and athletics teams. This trend continued when I got to university where I also captained the College Hockey and Athletics teams. It was in 2002, however, that I first took up an administrative role in sport. I was appointed a committee member for the organization of celebrations of Women in Athletics and it was during this time that I began to observe and understand that women themselves also negatively contribute to the misrepresentation of women in sport. This celebration of Women in Athletics took place concurrently with a basic athletics coaching course in which a few of us on the committee took part. It was rumoured that one of us got

intimately involved with one of the IAAF facilitators. This allegation was somehow taken very seriously by some officials at the Malawi National Olympic Committee (MNOC) and the concerned female member from the Women in Athletics Celebrations committee was removed. After the decision was announced a serious argument ensued as some of us on the committee argued that what had happened in the private life of an individual should not be allowed to affect work. Moreover, the authorities of the programme did not even seem to have had evidence and the concerned female member was not even heard. It was basically gossip and done out of jealousy. It was even more disappointing because the person behind this rumour was a prominent female leader in sport.

I have held several leadership positions and in various capacities. The fact that I have been in sport almost all my life, means that I have also experienced and seen a lot of challenges. Unfortunately, I was a lone voice. I am innately quiet and did not always feel confident to debate and argue on issues as I felt inferior and perceived that I did not have enough knowledge of the issues. To make things worse, issues to do with promotion of women in sport, and women empowerment in general, were just being introduced and very few people really understood what women empowerment was all about. I was, however, fortunate and lucky compared to other women because I have good academic qualifications that people, including men, respect me for. In my experience, I have observed that somehow men tend to look down upon women who have no or little education while they have more respect for female leaders who are perceived to be well educated and highly regarded in society. It is because of the education and training I have gone through and the experiences over the 15 years I have been working with the MNCS that I now feel more comfortable and more confident to discharge my duties which include helping to improve and increase the participation of women in sport in Malawi.

It is a commonly accepted fact that sport has the power to change people's lives. I am a living example of this. I come from a poor family where my siblings and relatives have very poor education as well as economic background which makes it literally a miracle that I am an isolated one who has the qualifications I have. I never thought in

my life, given the background of my family that I would travel outside Malawi and live a comparatively better life. Generally it is because of sport that I have been to almost all the continents of the world and I cannot even count the number of times I have been on a plane. In fact, in a few weeks will be on my way to the United Kingdom to attend a Women Sport Leadership Academy. Both my husband and I are employed in sport and are doing quite well in life. Together, we own some assets which include a house and vehicles and are able to support our immediate as well as the extended families.

The above be as it may, my growth as a female sports leader has not been without challenges. The challenges are many but I will highlight only a few. Traditionally sport is a place for men. Gender inequality in sport in Malawi is driven by culture. The cultural system in Malawi is mostly patriarchal and therefore, culturally, men are decision makers while women are regarded as inferior and destined for home and to take orders from men. Women in most cases are looked down upon. Men do not like to be led by women. Unfortunately, one cannot separate oneself fully from tradition and this is what is killing the advancement of women sport in Malawi. Although the thinking is beginning to change, it is generally and culturally believed that women belong to the home. I, in fact, believe that it is going to take long and a lot of effort to change that perception.

As indicated earlier, women themselves are sometimes their own enemy to their own development and progress for many reasons. Very rarely does one find women supporting each other and recognizing fellow women's success stories. Instead, they love to gossip and bring each other down – a situation dubbed "PHD syndrome" (Pull Her Down). This is a big issue among women in Malawi. There is generally lack of support for one woman from another. As a Sport Development Manager I am privileged and have the opportunity to preside over many national sports governing bodies/associations general elections and I have observed, with sadness during these events, that, women rather vote for a male candidate even when there are capable fellow women vying for the same position. Even more pitiful is that this is regardless that the sport is an all women sport like Netball. Netball is one such association where women have voted for men into

positions on the association's board despite that there were capable and willing fellow women competing for the same positions. Furthermore, women are sometimes barriers to their own participation in sport as they do not offer themselves or come forward to take up leadership roles when opportunities rise. Throughout my life with the Sports Council as a Sport Development Officer, it is only in Netball where I have seen women vying for critical positions like President, Secretary and Treasurer. In most cases women go for supporting positions of the deputy or as mere members on the various committees. In an effort to support this cause the Malawi National Council of Sport introduced a Sport Business Management Course for sport people to help improve their capacity in sport management. It is sad to note that very few women apply to pursue this course to such the extent that in some cases the Council has short listed and enrolled women who did not even qualify to be on the course as a way to try and encourage women to take up such important training opportunity. Unfortunately, women keep on shunning the course. The National Olympic Committee is also running a similar programme with help from the IOC and the situation is the same. Only a handful of women participate in the course. Such training opportunities could help build capacity and confidence in women in order for them to be successful as leaders, not only in sport, but also in other areas of their personal life. Women need to change their attitude and stop looking down upon themselves if the battle is to be won.

I was lucky to have married a man who is also into sport and therefore, understands what sport participation, particularly female participation in sport entails. Marriage and family responsibilities present a lot of challenges as well to participation in sport by women. In fact, sport can sometimes be regarded as a high risk area in as far as marriage life is concerned. The behaviour of some women and girls in sport and related activities has left a bad picture of female participation in sport. As a result many men do not feel comfortable to release and allow their girls and women to participate in sport. There even have been cases where male sport officials have been involved sexually with female officials and even athletes and no disciplinary actions have been taken against them. All this has a negative effect on the development of women sport. I have been called names

such as “hule” (prostitute) because of my love and passion for sport. This has, however, not discouraged me. Rather it has given me the strength to be even more dedicated. However, the fact is that not all women are like me. I can also say that I am lucky because I have a team of work mates and leadership, all of whom are men, which has been and continues to be very supportive to the extent that I feel comparatively more comfortable among them than among fellow women. In fact, Malawi National Council of Sports empowers women through inclusivity in their programmes and other relevant bodies like the Women in Sport Commission whose membership consists mainly of women and provides an opportunity and forum for discussion, outreach and civic education on issues relating to sport participation.

The level of poverty in many households in Malawi has also contributed significantly to the current situation of sport in Malawi. Not only for women in sport but for sport in general. However, women sport has comparatively been the worst hit by the effects of poverty. Sport in Malawi is not a priority at all. As a result people would rather spend the little they have on other things such as food, shelter, education than on sport. Malawians in general except for a few, can hardly afford to buy sport equipment. Sport equipment is expensive and mostly not available locally. Children, and especially girls are expected to help at household level for the survival of the families and this limits the opportunities for the children to participate in sport. This has a multiple effect on sport participation by the public and especially the women folk. One of such is that women tend not to want to anymore participate in sport later on in their life when they grow up because they did not know sport and its related benefits as they grew up.

Finally, the media needs to change the way they present women sport. Women sport can equally benefit the nation as men’s sport. Unfortunately, women sport is presented, by the media, in a way that reflects a gender stereotype which negatively affects the development of women sport in Malawi. I personally am not media friendly. In fact I would do anything to avoid them because of an experience I had with them. A lot of demeaning and derogatory statements were said in the media about me when I went with a female

athlete to a junior championship where she was disqualified for breaking too early in an 800m race. I have since than never felt comfortable with the media.

On the other hand, I would be wrong if I do not mention the fact that despite all the problems and difficulties facing women sport in Malawi, there is political will to support and uplift women sport in Malawi. It is encouraging to see that a sport policy was developed and launched in 2007 which gives guidance on the issue in terms of sport development. There are also other related policies that support the development and empowerment of the girl child and women in general. There is, however, need for more to be done to ensure that a sustainable solution to the problem is achieved. Women sport can be as successful and equally beneficial financially as men's sport as long as relevant authorities who include government, private sector as well as development partners, can come in to support and invest in it the same way as men's sport. Literature has suggested that low participation in sport by women is a global problem. It is, therefore, important that collective policies and concerted effort be put in place to address women participation issues just as the global society is tirelessly working very hard and advocating for other serious social issues such as Ebola and HIV and AIDS, so that gender equality in sport can be realized in a sustainable way. Low participation by women in sport is in my opinion a serious social issue that needs serious attention.

Everybody knows that there are a lot of benefits that the world stands to gain from increased participation in sport by women. Further, gender inequality is not only relevant in sport. It is a societal issue and, therefore, needs a holistic approach. As indicated earlier, gender inequality exists in all sectors of our economy because it is driven by culture and as such the issue in sport cannot be resolved if it is not being addressed in the other sectors as well.

In conclusion, the honour of being a highly regarded sport leader, particularly female sport manager in Malawi, has instilled many qualities in me. In sport one gets to experience a lot which include pain, perseverance, sacrifice, adversity, disappointment, failure as well

as success. In particular I have learnt to be particularly disciplined to be able to handle such experiences, an important element that has even spread and contributed to the building of my personal character. Exposure to these experiences has beyond doubt taught me to appreciate life. Sport has taught me leadership. It is my hope that I will continue to somehow be involved and stay in sport for the rest of my life.

## **Aya Mahmoud Medany (Egypt) – 2014 Recipient of the IOC Women and Sport Continental trophy for Africa**

**Aya Mahmoud Medany** was born on 20 November 1988 in Egypt. Her father Mahmoud Medany was a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 alongside Al Gore. She works as a teacher assisting at the Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport as a teaching assistant. Her family refused to allow her to attend the rallies in Tahrir Square during the 2011 Egyptian revolution ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

Aya Mahmoud Medany as a three time Modern Pentathlon Olympian first competed at the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens at the age of 15 years. At that time she was the youngest competitor in the Egyptian Olympic team as well as in the Modern Pentathlon event and finished in the 28<sup>th</sup> place. She went on to compete in the 2008 Beijing and 2012 London Olympic Games.

After 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games she started to wear a hijab despite the fact she says it gives her a disadvantage in the running events in the Modern Pentathlon. She was the only female competitor in the Modern Pentathlon at the 2012 London Summer Olympic Games who competed with a hijab respecting her cultural and religious beliefs. She announced her retirement in 2013 due to the FINA ban on full-body swimsuits in the swimming event in the pentathlon. Aya Mahmoud Medany stated that she wants to

swim in an outfit conforming to the Muslim faith which contradicts the swimming outfit requirements of FINA that states that "shall not cover the neck, extend past the shoulder, nor extend below the knee" ([www.fina.org](http://www.fina.org)).

In Egypt Aya Mahmoud Medany has contributed to the introduction of school biathlon. She also assisted the Egyptian Modern Pentathlon Federation to raise money for equipment aimed at promoting girls' and women's participation in Pentathlon. Her continued advocacy for creating opportunities for girls and women in sport in Egypt is mirrored in her participation in numerous charity events and tournaments in different sports.

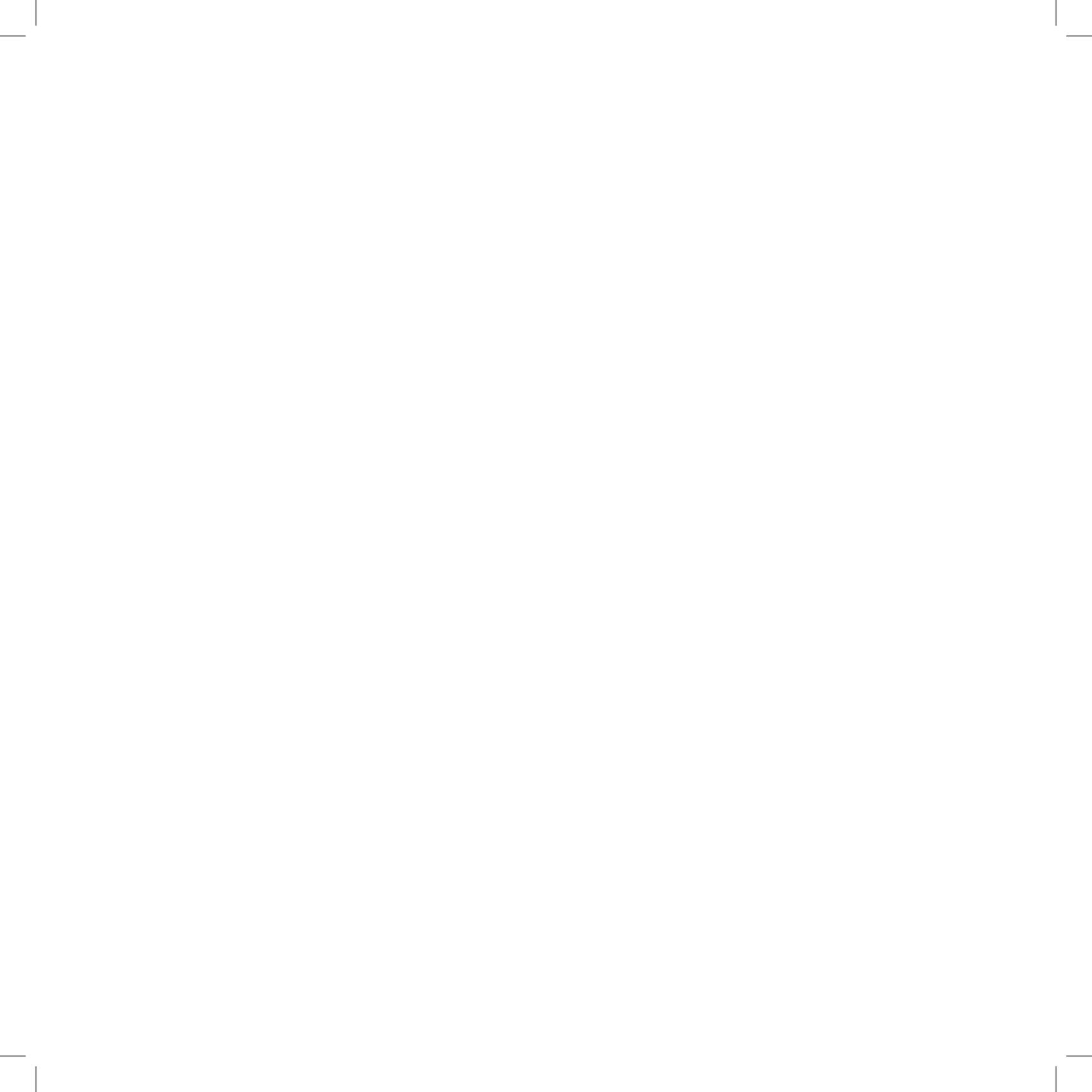
Aya Mahmoud Medany is widely regarded and recognised as a role model and mentor in sport for many girls and women in Egypt. She has used her celebrity status to engage with the media and senior government officials responsible for sport and physical education about the importance of promoting equal opportunities for women and men in Egypt. She is currently actively involved in fundraising campaigns to help girls and women pursue their education without stopping their sport careers ([www.olympicreview.com](http://www.olympicreview.com)).

## CONCLUSION

From the stories narrated in this chapter it is evident that there are strong women in Africa serving in leadership positions in influential global, continental and national sport organizations. The prominent storyline and pioneering work of "being the first or only" again shines through in these women's stories: Lydia Nsekera from Burundi being the first elected female FIFA executive board member as well as the first chair from an African country of the IOC Women and Sport Commission, Meriem Cherni Mizouni being the first female recipient from Africa of the IOC World Women and Sport Trophy, Flora Mwandira from Malawi as the first female Chef de Mission of a national Olympic team to an Olympic

Games from Malawi, Ruth Kenani Mzenge being the first in her family to earn a university degree, Eugenia Chidhakwa (Zimbabwe) being the Chairperson of Women and Sport in Region 5 in Africa and Aya Mahmoud Medany being the only female participant in the 2012 London Summer Olympic Games in the Modern Pentathlon competition choosing to wear a hijab reflecting her religious and cultural convictions.

# **7 | INSPIRATIONAL FEMALE SPORTS JOURNALISTS IN AFRICA**



# INTRODUCTION

One more area in African sport that reflects gender inequality in sports is the field of media and sport. Apart from the inequitable coverage of female sport in the print, digital and social media across the world, female sports journalists are in the minority for a number of reasons. Despite the fact that Africa has countless knowledgeable female sports fans that rally not only behind their national sports teams but also for local sports teams, there are very few female sports journalists in Africa. The gender division in media houses in Africa is very much pronounced. The majority of female journalists cover “soft” news like culture, home and garden and food while male journalists cover the “hard” news like politics, finances and sports. Cultural stereotypes in Africa often dictate the news beats for female journalists. Jean Chalungama, a female sports journalist at Blantyre’s FM101 Power in Malawi, reckons that women have a mind-set that sport is for men only and that it is easier for women to become sports journalists when they are immersed in sport from a young age (<http://genderlinks.org.za>). Carol Manana Tshabalala is another prominent female sports journalist at cable television SuperSport in South Africa. She stated in more than one interview that it is “totally cool” being a female in a male dominated industry. She carried on and said that it was tough in the beginning when she was trying to establish herself in this male dominated context. She continued to work hard and stood out because she got the best interviews with sports people and readers appreciated what she does (<http://genderlinks.org.za>).

Even though sports journalism continues to be a strong fortress of male domination in Africa there are, formidable and competent female sports journalists reporting from and in Africa and whose stories and dedication inspire female journalism students to become sports journalists. The stories **of Leocadia Bongben (Cameroon), Inas Mazhar (Egypt), Evelyn Watta (Kenya) and Kass Naidoo (South Africa)** will be highlighted in this chapter.

## Leocadia Bongben (Cameroon)

Years ago, when men dominated sports journalism, Leocadia Bongben made her way in and shattered the glass ceiling of sports journalism. Over the years Leocadia has won the respect of her colleagues and readers in Africa and she did so with poise and elegance. Leocadia was one of a handful of female sports journalists from Africa who reported on the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

Sisterspeak237 (<http://sisterspeak237.com/leocadia-bongben-trail-blazer-for-female-sports-journalism-in-cameroon>) interviewed Leocadia while she was reporting on the FIFA World Cup in Brazil. The interview below reflects a woman who is blazing the trail for female sports journalists in Cameroon, and who makes her own footprint in sports reporting.

**Cameroon sports journalists (mostly male) covering World Cup Games in Brazil use the words 'courageous', "daring" & pace setter to describe you. Wow!! What's it like to be a female sports reporter?**

I don't think there is anything special to being a female sports journalist, but striving to be up-date with what is happening like the others. This means going to the stadium when Elite One games are played, writing articles and being consistent in what one is doing. If there is an Anglophone journalist who is always present, in sports events, then I am the one.

**What inspired you to get into sports journalism?**

"Inspiration? I did not have such a thing as inspiration, it was a discovery. When I started working for *The Post*, I discovered men had love for politics and I had to do something else. Then I went into sports and being consistent, I like carved a niche for myself in this area. It's still a male dominated niche".

### **Generally, what's the ratio of men: women in the sports newsroom?**

"Though dominated by men, reporting on sports is becoming more open to women. In news rooms the ratio may still be like 1:3, there is an evolution. At the World Cup, I could count four female journalists from Cameroon, and it is interesting to note that Cameroon Tribune Sports desk is being handled by women, in Mutations Newspaper there are female sports reporters. We have an association of female sports reporters and a branch of the African Female Sports Reporters Association, there is change".

### **Female sports reporters are few and those venturing into it have no road map. How did you find your way through?**

" Finding my way, I don't think it was difficult, there are men in this area, so I learnt and I am still learning from them, reading, listening, and watching what they say on radio, TV, websites, and newspapers. It means my day begins with Amplitude FM at 6:30, Radio Siantou at 7:00am, 9:00am at CRTV, then the websites, [www.camfoot.com](http://www.camfoot.com), [www.mboafotball.com](http://www.mboafotball.com). Also keeping their contacts, when I need information, or contacts of experts I call one or two who can give it to me. Being where there is action, if Fecafoot is organizing elections and ending at 2:00 am I make sure I am there with the guys. The only way to get information correctly is being there at the event till the end".

### **What problems do you face as a female sports reporter?**

"I face the same problems as other reporters – access to information; but working with others who have sources, it is easy to overcome. In terms of sexual harassment as some people imagine that all female sports journalists are harassed, at times such issues are there, but when they find out I am not their type, and being able to tell them off, men with such intensions simply disappear .We are friends, we work together. I once jumped from a height to get to the field in Senegal, (nothing broken) because I was suffocating at the end of the match when I found myself in a crowd. One solution. Jump!"

### **What have been your defining moments?**

"Being at the center of the action and being able to break a story at the same time with others. An example is when Sameul Eto'o Fils was suspended by the federation, I was always there to get the latest information and when I find it in the papers the next day or online on BBC sport website, or radio it is fulfilling".

### **What are the highlights of your career as a sports journalist?**

"My highlights as a sports journalists have been, covering the finals of the Champions League in 2008; covering some Lions qualification matches; being selected among 118 journalists in Africa to train ahead of the 2010 World Cup in Ghana, and produced articles under a project dubbed, African media on the road to 2010; training under the banner of African Female Sports Journalists-Fifa project in Senegal, 2011; Covering the African Nations Cup in 2010 in Angola; the World Cup in South Africa in 2010; All Africa Games in Maputo, Mozambique in 2011; and the World Cup in Brazil in 2014".

### **You're currently covering World Cup 2014 in Brazil; tell me about your experiences.**

"It is not easy to cover a World Cup in a vast country like Brazil. The long distances, one of which was from Vitoria to Manaus, five hours flight, I had to look for the media accreditation center, get my badge, because this is the first thing, without which you cannot get into the stadium. Then I had a problem, as the last of the journalists to get FIFA accreditation for the three Cameroon games. I had to be on the waiting list to get a card for the press conference and mixed zone. At the end I had these and went to the press conference and mixed zones where players are interviewed. When this is done once it becomes a routine. Volunteers were very friendly, once I forgot my laptop charger and one had to look for someone to help, I used his to charge my laptop. Being unable to speak Portuguese has been a problem, we do sign language and sometimes we get the wrong things. Just to indicate that I am still here (in Brazil) even when the Lions are back home because I

was selected for a programme, called Discover Football, to promote female football and women's rights, run by a German NGO. Ufei Nseke (a Cameroonian journalist) and I are among ten selected for the campaign in Rio de Janeiro".

### **What progress do women still need to make in the field of sports journalism?**

"Progress as such I don't think. Many are up to the task; they need just encouragement and confidence".

### **Where can we read your reports?**

"I have my stories in The Post and updates on football website [www.lions4life.com](http://www.lions4life.com) with articles. I also do situation reports to BBC Africa Sports service radio".

Leocadia Bongben has a BA Mass Communication degree from the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria. Her hobbies include travelling, music and watching movies. She loves the traditional Cameroonian dish of Fufu and Kati but also likes western style chips and fried chicken. Her favourite colour is black and her role model is Christina Amampour from CNN.

## **Inas Mazhar (Egypt)**

Inas Mazhar is the first-ever female head (Editor-in-Chief) of a sports section in Egypt. She is the Sports Page Editor of the English Language Newspaper Al-Ahram Weekly in Egypt since 1992, a BBC World Service sports correspondent in Egypt and North Africa and the first woman and non-European to join the International Sports Press Association Handball Commission.

Inas Mazhar reflected in an article she wrote on the role of the media in women's sport and also on her own involvement, challenges and perceptions as female sports

journalist. The article is presented below as illustration of Inas' influence and advocacy as female sports journalist in Africa.

**IMAGES OF WOMEN'S SPORT BEYOND ESTHETICS: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA**  
**by Inas Mazhar**

(sports journalist, *Al-Ahram* Newspaper, Egypt.)

Nobody can deny the role that media plays in our lives in general. In the same vein, sports media, covering both men and women, have had a tremendous impact. As a member of the media, I can say that since its early days, the media have in general been an asset to sportsmen and – women. They have helped introduce sports to interested – and in fact previously uninterested readers and viewers – and have encouraged the public to become more health conscious as more and more people take up playing some kind of sport as a pastime.

The media have helped our sports champions become world celebrities, their fame outstripping film stars and at times, upstaging even presidents and kings. I certainly believe, and I say this tongue in cheek, that the media was quite pleased when women arrived on the sports scene to participate in serious competitions. The media have found in women quite an interesting subject as their power to attract more admirers to newspapers, magazines and TV has proven very strong. Their pictures, which adorn the glossy covers of magazines and sometimes leave little to the imagination, are these days found not just in the sports section where one would have normally found them, but everywhere: front, back and center pages. The media have turned them into mega stars and their fame, not to mention fortune, has shot up to somewhere in the stratosphere.

Media has too often portrayed women in sport in a stereotyped and trivialized manner. Of more concern to the media is looks and outward appearance. Not nearly enough focus is given to women champions beyond their aesthetic qualities nor the efforts exerted and fought for in order to reach the peak of their profession. If this is what

concerns the media, not to mention male spectators, it most certainly should not. Media should portray women champions as idols not by concentrating on their looks but on their talents, skills and achievements.

In a game like tennis, for example, most women have hit the big time – thanks to the media – even if the focus of attention is undeserved. A case in point is Russia's teenager Anna Kournikova, who in her short career has graced the cover of dozens of magazines, even though she has yet to win a single championship of note. She, too, is so engrossed in her appearance which stands to bring her millions in fashion and make-up deals, that it must be effectively her tennis.

Such high-profile coverage does not necessarily have the same impact on team sports; the media has many times turned its attention to individual sports instead, giving short shrift to genuinely talented individuals who have been unable to project a true image of their worth simply because they must share whatever success they achieve with their teammates. A player in an individual sport, however, is allowed to shine, no matter whether the talent is there or not. Looks are many times, and unfortunately, the ultimate decision-maker.

We have in Egypt, for instance, Rania Elwani, one of the world's top 10 female short distance swimmers. Rania is by no means beautiful, but she is not bad looking either. And her sports uniform – a skin-tight swimming suit – would leave the door open to many comments about her overall physique. However, there has never been anything written or publicly said about Rania in Egyptian media other than her accomplishments in the pool. Perhaps the farthest any media has gone would be to ask the very innocent question as to when or whether she will get married.

The way the athletes look, how they act in their personal life and how this is portrayed in the media is not limited to women only. A famous case in point is Dennis Rodman, whose skills helped the Chicago Bulls become the basketball team of the 1990s. But

Rodman's talents on the court have been far overshadowed by his off the court lifestyle and his, to say the least, bizarre and eccentric lifestyle and behavior.

It is, whether we like it or not, athletes like Rodman who are today's role models for our youth. It is they whom our teenagers look up to. Our would-be Navratilovas, Jordans and Lewis' are concentrating not just on becoming champions and gold medal winners in their respective sports but on emulating their idols – in the hope of becoming just like them – in every facet of their lives, be it good or bad. It is unfortunate that the latter many times supersedes the former. We would much rather prefer that a sports hero be a clean-cut, clean living exponent of the game, somebody who looks and acts just like the proverbial girl or boy next door. Realistically, though, this is not the case and will probably never be.

If we are to explore the reasons for this state of affairs, one would have to look no further than the media as the biggest culprit. If it was not for our TV, magazines and newspapers, such athletes whose good looks and sometimes wayward personal style would never have had the forum, a stage, from which to perform before the world. We in the media are helping to create what we publicly say we do not like. I daresay that had our media not been so possessed with shining the spotlight on how great some women athletes look, the athletes themselves would not, in turn, be so obsessed with their appearance.

I come from Egypt, which is Arab and Islamic. We have a heritage and traditions which have been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years. Needless to say, women sports have come under scrutiny in Egypt and in the region as a whole. Women must and are forced to either retire from a sport early in life or not take up sports at all. The reasons are varied. Either because they must get married early, or are frightened away by what is considered unseemly muscles that may be built upon their frame, or because of religion. You know the adage, "Children should be seen and not heard". Here, in the Middle East, many, many women should be neither heard nor seen and

certainly never on a court, field or pool. Whatever the reasons, the results are the same. Women has-beens in sports, coupled with those who never made it, can only lead to a deterioration of sports, many times threatening the very future of certain games.

These conceptual taboos are changing surely but slowly. In our society the media have fought for the rights of women, not just in sport but in all aspects of life. They have succeeded to an extent and the percentage of the number of women practising sports has increased. But it is an uphill battle in which success is measured in ounces as opposed to the tons of problems and obstacles that remain rock hard.

Some members of the media here have tried to tackle the problem head on and have probably learned a thing or two from women's soccer which has seen its popularity grow by leaps and bounds during and after last summer's football World Cup in the United States. It is a fact that frequent and regular media coverage of women's soccer in the past few years have helped it to become an official sport. Noteworthy in this respect that in Egypt we have introduced a women's football league which has been getting coverage, albeit irregular.

In Egypt, our conservatism, both in our media and athletes, has helped focus attention on what should be focussed on. May I be so bold as to say that in my country, beauty, as far as we are concerned, is only skin deep. Inside us all is a much bigger wealth that the media constantly tries to nurture.

It's fine to look pretty and if God has granted it, even beautiful. What is not so fine is to make a big deal out of it. Among several other negative aspects, this can only hurt truly great athletes who are simply not endowed with God given beauty. It is a point to consider. Natural beauty is a gift; it is not earned. Great sportsmen and women must sweat to reach the top of their profession. That is where the real glory lies.

If women sports at a global level are progressing and spectator interest increasing in the world, it's safe to say that women in the media have definitively helped. Several

sportswomen, after retiring, have signed on to work for TV stations as commentators and newspapers as reporters, fields once entirely dominated by men.

Seeing a women journalist or even a photographer on a sports field is now a familiar sight. Not too long ago, they were looked upon as intruders on the field. At the start of my career, I was only Half-jokingly told by male colleagues to find myself another job where I would need only to sit at a desk and go home to my parents or my husband by midday. Some even suggested I quit altogether, get married and have children. I did not take the advice. For the next nine years, I worked in sports and was, I believe, able to make a name for myself of sorts. I recently married, and I did not take this step until I was sure I had found a broad-minded and understanding individual. He is a typical Eastern male, but he supports me and has nothing but praise for my achievements.

Women journalists in Egypt have proven themselves, if not in covering male events, then in at least fighting for women's sports and trying to spread women sports through reporting and covering them in detail, stressing on their more serious aspects such as training methods.

In the last decade, not only in my country but the world over, few women have managed to make significant inroads in sports media. Now, that is rapidly changing. From my tours all over the world and having attended several international events, I have seen this for myself. One example can be found in the 1998 World Cup in France. Male members of the media as well as fans in the stands were surprised to see a veiled woman photographer on the field. She was an Iranian Muslim. Neither her society nor her religion prevented this woman from working and trying to prove herself.

In Egypt, in the early 1990s there were only four women members in the Sports Journalists Association – along with 170 male colleagues. Now, we are 12 women registered in the association, not to mention women freelancers not officially registered.

I believe that if women sports journalists are to succeed they should work for it, fight for it in order to prove themselves No one is going to fight on their behalf. It is they, and they alone, who must carve a niche for themselves among their male counterparts. I can assure you, as my experience attests, they will be most welcome. These women are taking on a huge responsibility as they continue to fight what they, and enlightened members of our society, believe is right.

(<http://library.la84.org/OlympicInformationCenter/OlympicReview/2000/OREXXVI32/OREXXVI32zl.pdf>).

## **Evelyn Watta (Kenya) – CNN Multichoice African Sports Journalist of the Year Award Winner**

Evelyn Watta is another example of a female sports journalist in Africa that delivers sustained excellence in the media. Evelyn has 14 years' experience working as a broadcast and online sports journalist. She was the Sports Editor of NTV Group in Kenya and is now a Senior Reporter/Subeditor at [sportsnewsarena.com](http://sportsnewsarena.com) where she has been since 2012. In her career she reported on major sporting events from the Olympics, Commonwealth Games, Youth Olympics, Africa Football Cup of Nations, African Athletics for the newspapers The Daily Nation, The Star, online publications, the radio stations Nation FM, Deutsche Welte and television stations like NTV and Chinese TV ([http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/africa/africanawards/finalists\\_2014.html](http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/africa/africanawards/finalists_2014.html)).

In 2014 Evelyn won the prestigious CNN Multichoice African Sports Journalist of the Year. Ahead of the 28 finalists selected for the annual prestigious award held in Dar es Salaam in Kenya. The ceremony was graced by Jakaya Kikwete the president of Tanzania who called for media freedom across the continent.

By winning the CNN Award Evelyn joins the growing list of celebrated Kenya's Sports journalists whose works have been recognized internationally for journalism excellence. Evelyn won the CNN Award with her comprehensive article on the Senegalese wrestling heritage. In her reporting on this traditionally male sports activity in Senegal, Evelyn transported the reader into the midst of a packed stadium with her fascinating article about the importance of wrestling in Senegal. She described all the elements that go into making this hugely popular sport much more than just a test of physical strength. She explained how and why it has become a cult phenomenon in Senegal, giving a taste of the buzzing atmosphere. She uncovered the intricate superstitions performed by the contestants, the personalities involved and the commercial aspect which has literally taken many from rags to riches ([www.sportsarena.com](http://www.sportsarena.com)).

In her acknowledgement statement after receiving the award, Evelyn said, "Sports is the winner. I thank my colleagues for walking with me through this sporting journey. Truly nothing is more fun than doing what people say you can't do" (<http://www.michezoafrika.com/commentary/kenyas-evelyne-watta-wins-cnn-award/17426>). Evelyn is currently the acting secretary general of AIPS and treasurer of Sports Journalists Association of Kenya (SJAK).

BBC Africa conducted interviews with **Inas Mazhar (Egypt)** and **Evelyn Watta (Kenya)** as part of their "Women in Sports" series. In these interviews Inas and Evelyn talk about the trials and tribulations they've faced. They explain how they juggle family life with sports reporting and how some cultures deal with women journalists in sometimes an all-male environment. Readers are urged to access these inspiring interviews at the following internet address <https://audioboom.com/boos/2582352-the-challenges-for-female-sports-journalists-in-africa>.

## Kass Naidoo (South Africa)

Kass Naidoo was born on January 12, 1978 in Durban South Africa. She graduated from the Dr A.D. Lazarus Secondary School and completed her National Diploma in Journalism at the Durban University of Technology in 1998. Kass landed a vacation job at The Mercury newspaper in Durban at the end of her first year of study at Durban University of Technology (previously Technikon Natal). This initial assignment gave her the confidence to pursue her career in journalism (<http://whoswho.co.za/kass-naidoo-8305>).

Kass Naidoo is South Africa's first female cricket commentator. Kass made her cricket broadcasting debut when she anchored the 2003 ICC Cricket World Cup for SABC. In December 2004, she made her radio commentary debut. In October 2005, she realised her childhood dream when she commentated on TV. To date, Kass has hosted three World Cup broadcasts for SABC Sport. She also spent four years at Cricket South Africa (CSA), shaping and promoting the brands of CSA and the Proteas [the national male cricket team of South Africa] (<http://whoswho.co.za/kass-naidoo-8305>).

During her career Kass received many Awards in the field of Journalism including Best Sports Presenter, People Magazine Crystal Award, Best Radio Sports Presenter, SAB Sports Journalist of the Year Award and Newcomer of the Year Award.

During an open interview with Kass Naidoo (<http://www.leadershipinsport.co.za/articles/bouncing-back-interview-with-kass-naidoo-8505.html>) she spoke about her love for cricket [a predominantly male sport in South Africa] and how women with aspirations in sport can make it. The interview follows below.

The name, Kass Naidoo, is synonymous with cricket in South Africa. In many aspects, Naidoo paved the way for women in sport. In 2004, she made her commentary debut on radio and a year later achieved the dream she first dreamt as a 14-year-old – Naidoo became the first female cricket commentator on television in South Africa. Things

have changed a bit now but back in the early to middle 2000's South Africa was not used to seeing a woman being a presenter when it came to their beloved sport. For this reason Naidoo would have faced more scrutiny compared to most other presenters.

Naidoo explains how the opportunity to present came about, "I went for an audition to *Topsport* (now *SABC Sport*) and was later trained by veteran broadcaster, Martin Locke, who advised me to do something else. He was afraid I would be found out because I hadn't played the game. Considering that I had worked for more than a decade to achieve this dream and then to be given a chance, there was no way I was going to give up. A few months later, I was called with news that I would be hosting the 2003 ICC Cricket World Cup".

Naidoo explains that despite some doubts, there were also people backing her. "It was a wonderful thing. I revelled in the opportunity given to me by the SABC. It was a brave move, very few stakeholders supported the decision to 'have a girl front the World Cup', but Mvuso Mbebe backed me, and I didn't let them down".

In Naidoo's broadcasting days one could see from simply watching the game and listening to her that she is a very passionate woman. Despite the fact that Naidoo did not play the game her knowledge was right up there with the very best. It was clear to see, when listening or watching Naidoo, that she is very passionate about cricket: "I am passionate about a few things, including sport and South Africa. I love life and I strive as much as possible to live in the moment and savour the experience".

Naidoo's love for the game is obvious but you need more than love to achieve what she has achieved. Luck plays a part but hard work is what really separates those who make it with those who don't. Naidoo refused to throw in the towel despite the fact that she was told she won't make it in the industry. As a woman, and a woman of colour, it was a tough journey for Naidoo, who at age 14 fell in love with the game. "The moment I heard a West Indian woman, Donna Symmonds, commentate I knew it was what I wanted to do.

At the time cricket in South Africa was white and male dominated, and I felt a need to be more included in the game. Commentating seemed a good way to help connect people who love cricket”.

Naidoo recalls her first post-match presentation: “Having never played cricket, it was tough breaking into this industry. Being a woman in a man’s world made the challenge steeper. What helped was that I understood the role that I played. Whether I was presenting or commentating I was a facilitator of information from some of the greatest cricket experts in the game”.

Naidoo continued, “My mentor over the years has been the legendary Robin Jackman. When I got the opportunity to host the post-match presentations, I had no clue what to do. Robin walked me through the process, introducing me to the match referee, sponsors, administrators, and he talked me through the running order. I did as he told me. I got regular feedback from him and am forever grateful for his input”.

When asked if she is proud to have cracked a male dominated arena she remains humble in her response “I am glad I was signed up relatively early in my career, it helped having the courage of my twenties to pull me through those years. But I have only been in cricket for 10 years. I still have a long way to go in terms of really cracking it”.

Naidoo, who now has first-hand experience in the industry is putting that knowledge to good use in trying to create similar opportunities for other woman who have similar aspirations, of making the cut in South African sport.

In 2006, she started a company called, gsport4girls, an online initiative which aims to raise the profile of women’s sport in South Africa. “It has been run as a voluntary organisation since inception in August 2006, and seven years later, we are forming the gsport Trust, guided by seven imminent women, to take the gsport mission forward”.

When asked what the key goal is for the company: "Raising the profile of women's sport is a daily commitment. One of the key challenges facing women's sport in South Africa is a lack of exposure, which holds sponsors back from lending their support. The company gsport sees itself as part of the solution, telling the story of women's sport and shining a bright light on our athletes".

In 2008, Naidoo left commentating and presenting to fulfil the role of commercial and corporate relations manager at Cricket South Africa (CSA). She was responsible for growing the brands of CSA and the Proteas [the Proteas is the national male cricket team of South Africa]. "I led an ambitious plan by CSA to merge its Commercial, Marketing, Events and Communications departments to ensure a more collaborative approach to promoting cricket.

"Alongside that, during my four years at CSA, the mandate was to help make cricket a truly national sport, which for me meant an almost daily focus on development and transformation matters".

In Naidoo's time at CSA the 2009 Indian Premier League (IPL) was brought to South that tournament will know how big it is. The commercial aspect is huge and the logistics behind bringing the IPL to South African shores was beyond imaginable. At the time it was decided that South Africa would host the event, Naidoo was on maternity leave.

"I agreed to cut short my maternity leave, and to return to help with what was a massive effort. The fact that CSA managed to pull off that mega-event in less than three weeks was a near miracle".

After the successful 2009 IPL the now infamous bonus saga hit CSA. This led to the dismissal of then CEO, Gerald Majola. Majola and Kass Naidoo were known to have a very good working relationship at the time, but Naidoo was never found to have done anything wrong. At the time Naidoo remained quiet and did not give statements. "My mandate was

unchanged, and I couldn't use a professional capacity to protest a personal injustice. The comfort of knowing that I did nothing wrong helped me endure the pain of being accused. I ignored the noise and continued with my job to take cricket to the people".

The saga referred to was the bonuses given to some officials at CSA for hosting the IPL and even though Naidoo had received a bonus, she had nothing to do with the decision to do so.

"My decision to resign became inevitable when I was advised that the matter had become a PR issue. It had become clear that I was no longer the right person to lead Corporate Relations at CSA, and I opted to leave".

This kind of thing happens in everyday business, not only at CSA. But how does one manage to recover from such an ordeal – when your name is dragged through the mud on national and international television?

"Cricket is part of my life. There is much more to me. I am a wife, mom, daughter, sister, aunt. And having that warm family support pulled me through".

This is the kind of experience that could destroy a person, but Naidoo has shown many times that she has deserved her respective positions in the cricketing world and that she is not out of place. She admits that her main concern was the effect it had on her family: "I was strong because I knew everything would eventually be okay".

Naidoo has some advice for young woman who might go through something similar: "Always follow process and protocol. If you follow process, you fulfil the mandate. Whatever the headlines, your conscience will always be clear".

Naidoo now spends more of her time with her family – she has two children, a four year old and a 18 month old. She goes on to explain what else she has been up to this

last year or so: "The past year has allowed me to develop gsport4girls further and firm up its mandate. And recently I took up a fantastic opportunity to co-host an exciting new daily sports show on 2000FM – Game On which airs Monday to Friday from 3-4pm – and appeals to everyone from cricket coaches to soccer moms".

Naidoo believes that there are no problems for woman wanting to get into the industry of commentating and presenting sport in South Africa. However, she believes that the problems start once you are in: "Getting in isn't the problem. The challenge is enduring the growing pains of an industry that is still struggling to accommodate women. And that is why there is a responsibility for women who come into this environment to break further ground. The struggle is far from over".

There are prominent positions within South African sport that are filled with female role models and Naidoo believes that putting more focus on these people will help develop more woman in the coming years. "There are some excellent role models in terms of women leaders in sport, including Mimi Mthethwa, president of Netball South Africa; Wimpie du Plessis, president of Rowing South Africa; Marissa Langeni, CEO of the South African Hockey Association; Nomsa Mahlangu, head of Women's Football at SAFA and Sumayya Khan, COO of Sport and Recreation South Africa. We need to shine a brighter spotlight on those women who are indeed achieving in this area, to encourage others to follow in their footsteps".

The answer to not marginalising women in sport, according to Naidoo, is to give them more support. She had the support of a few people when she started out so she understands the situation that woman face rather well. Even though Naidoo was told to quit she backed herself and eventually earned the respect of not only her fellow workers but also of the countries cricket lovers. It is now refreshing to hear a woman commentating or presenting rather than feeling surprised. The door was opened by Kass Naidoo for woman to follow and break new ground.

Naidoo believes that knowledge sharing from people such as herself can play a massive part in woman becoming more prominent in South African sport. "Training and development is one of the best ways to breed strong leaders. The system needs to be receptive to real transformation. For that to happen, those who have achieved must find it within themselves to share their knowledge and help".

As the interview came to a close we asked Naidoo what leadership role she would take up if she could choose any sporting role from around the globe. The answer was surprising, but with a smile; South Africa's first female cricket commentator wants "to head McLaren Mercedes Racing".

Kass Naidoo says that broadcasting is in her blood and it will always be there for her to tap into. There is little doubt that Kass Naidoo will be in a prominent media position again where she can continue to motivate and inspire young South African woman to go out and get what they rightfully deserve.

### ***Gsport4girls*** – *online advocacy for female sport*

In 2006 Kass and her husband Ryk Meiring launched **gsport4girls** to significantly raise the profile of women in sport and encourage Corporate South Africa to back the country's female athletes. The initiative consists of a website, Facebook and Twitter profiles. Gsport4girls also hosts an annual awards event to laud individuals for their selfless contribution to women's sport.

The central aim of gsport4girls is to improve the profile of South African sports women. The rationale to focus on women's sport is according to gsport4girls because men's sport is well established, well-funded, and well-covered by the media. Women's sport, by contrast, is mostly sustained by a dedicated volunteer base of participants and supporters, and rarely receives media coverage; and it is about time that South African women's outstanding contribution to sport, as participants and as facilitators,

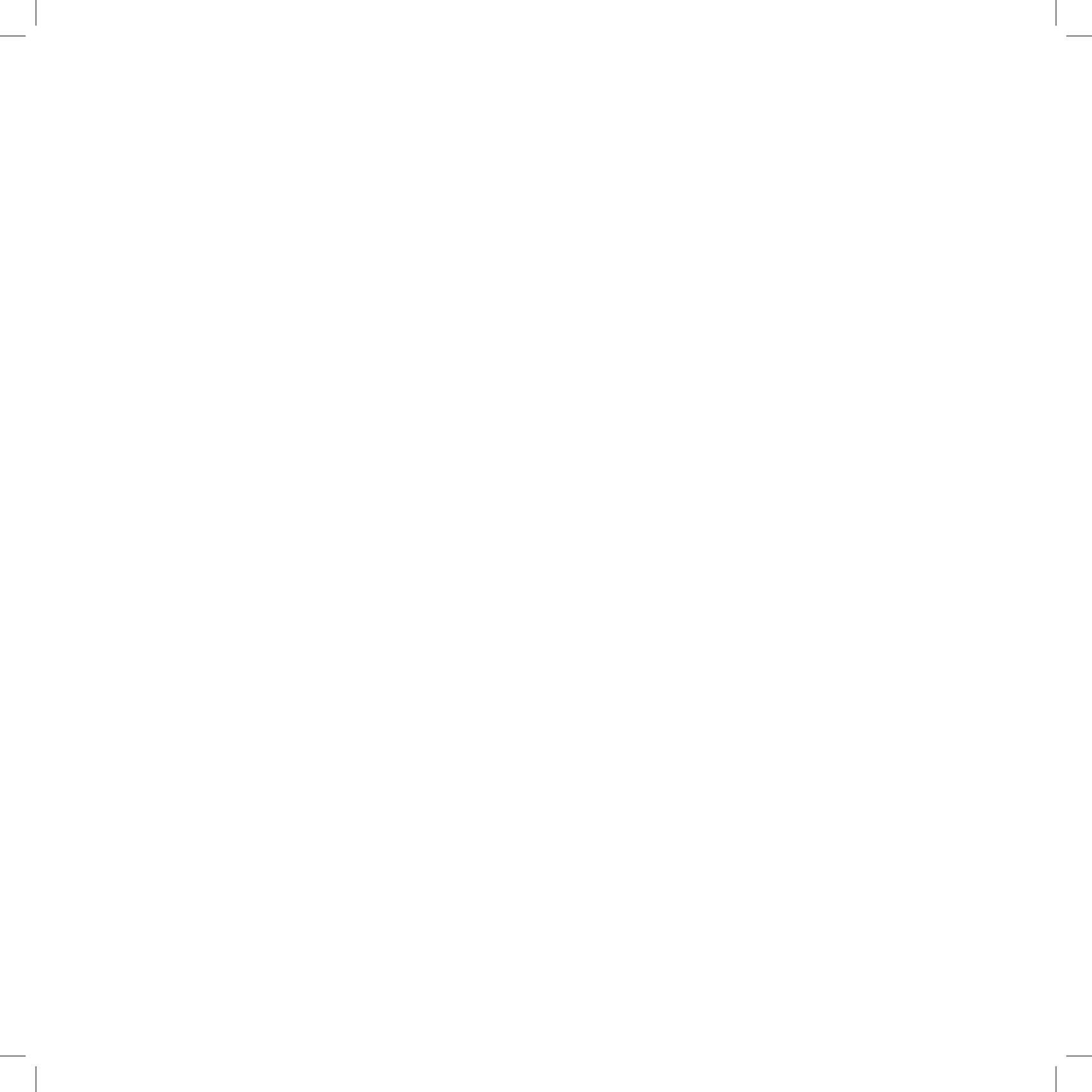
is recognised. The gsport4girls website currently publishes a daily Newsroom featuring breaking women's sports news, plus an archive of Leading Ladies interviews and Feature Articles. Readers of this volume can access gsport4girls on the social media through @gsport4girls on facebook, and follow @gsport4girls on twitter and online to read interviews with Leading Ladies in South African sport on <http://gsport.co.za>.

## CONCLUSION

The road for female sports journalists is not always smooth and easy in Africa. Yet, female sports journalists like Inas Mazhar, Kass Naidoo, Evelyn Watta and Leocadia Bongben persevered and in the end excelled in their chosen profession. Earlier in this volume the journalistic advocacy of Cheryl Roberts was discussed and demonstrated. Cheryl, in her own right, can also be described as a sports journalist as she owns her own publishing house that she uses to document and disseminate her reflections and thought provoking concerns on gender equality in South African sport. What these inspiring women have in common is the will and commitment to make their own decisions about their future careers. They are indeed role models for others to follow.

8

**EPILOGUE**



The quest for gender equality in society may have started in 1948 with the United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights and accelerated with the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. Gender equality concerns half of the global population and no country can develop fully without empowering all its citizens in all areas of society, including sport. Gender equality is therefore not a luxury, it is a basic human right.

The formal drive for gender equality in sport is embedded in the general pursuit for gender equality in society but can arguably be traced back to 1994 with the adoption of the Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport. Since then many declarations and calls for action for gender equality in sport saw the light. Unfortunately this journey has not yet reached its end goal.

Gender equality does not only rely on global initiatives on macro level. Sustained success is contextualised and conceptualised through micro level efforts on grass roots level, in the capacity, willingness and ability to make changes and advocate for gender equality within one's immediate surroundings. The voices and footprints of phenomenal and inspirational women in sport advocating for gender equality are heard and seen all over Africa on micro level. Their remarkable stories and endeavours narrated in this volume demonstrate willingness and persistence to change the lives of girls and women through sport and physical activity.

Africa is a vast continent with diverse people, cultures, traditions and guiding philosophies. The efforts of the women highlighted in this volume seem to be grounded in the philosophy of Ubuntu guiding humanistic social development in sub-Saharan Africa. The philosophy of Ubuntu rests on the values of caring, sharing, respect, compassion, reciprocity and interdependence – "Umuntu ngamuntu ngabantu – I am because we are".

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\* Graça Machel is the wife of former Mozambiquean President Samora Machel and later the wife of former South African President Nelson Mandela.

Ubuntu emphasises treating all people equally and fairly, regardless gender, creed or race. This ethical consciousness is seen throughout the narratives of the inspirational women in this volume, whether on micro level in remote villages or on macro level on the global stage of the Olympic Games. The philosophy of Ubuntu recognises the unique worth and valuable contribution of women in African society, alongside to that of men in society.

At the moment, in the words of Graça Machel\*:

Men and women have deeply unequal roles in sub-Saharan Africa, deeply entrenched in language and in the way men and women are moulded within our society. Our African culture has to be preserved but cannot be left unquestioned especially in the areas where it threatens life. We have to continue to be Africans but our children must be born to live, they cannot be born to die (<http://ubuntuinstitute.com/index.php/programmes/gender/>).

It is imperative that men and boys are also actively engaged in the fight against gender-based discrimination and violence in broader society and in sport specifically. Raising a new generation of girls and boys who respect one another as well as influencing the mind sets of men to work together to protect the rights of all people to access and participation in sport and physical activity remain critical for ultimately achieving gender equality.

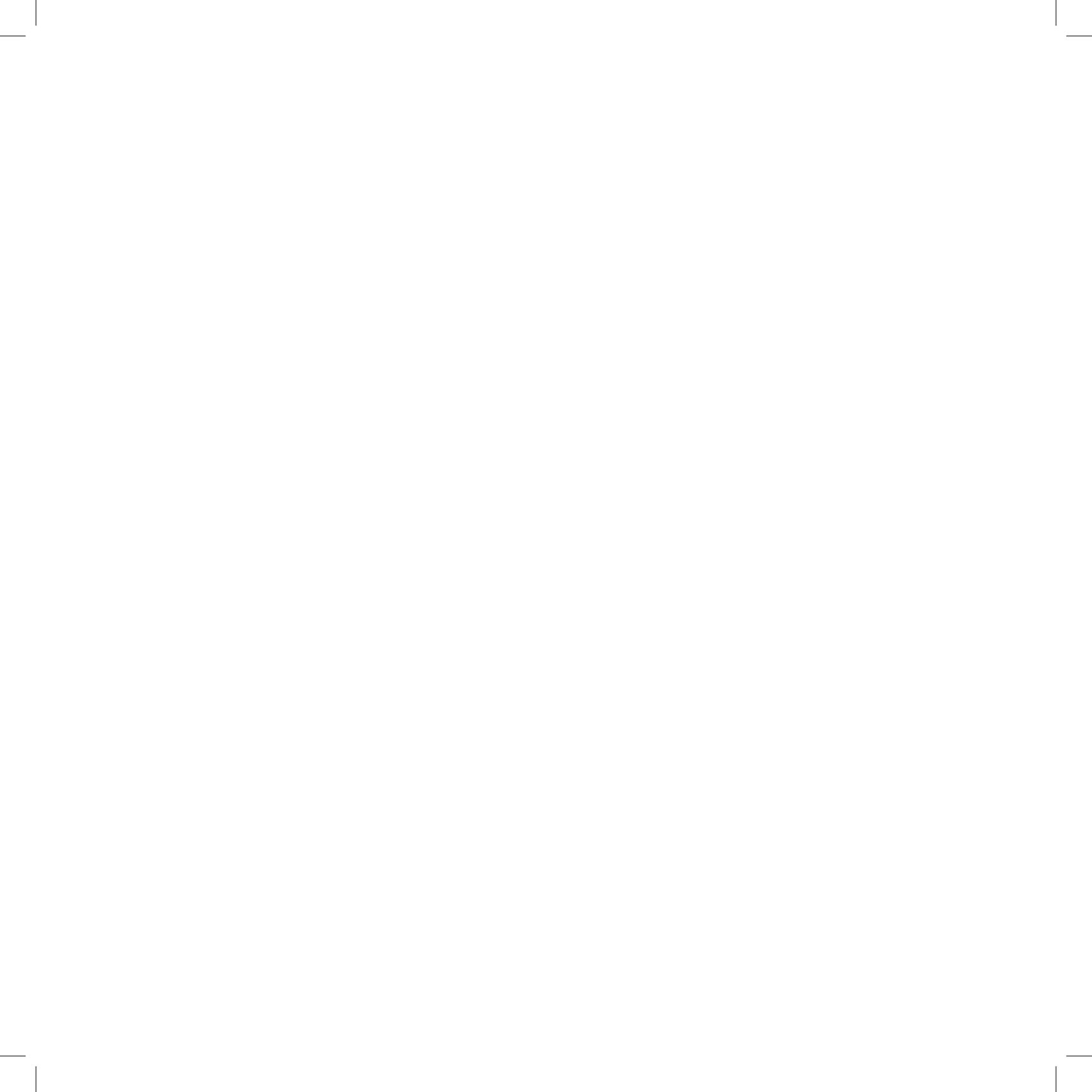
Women are the most convincing advocates for the solutions that we need, and in this particular case, gender equality in sport and physical activity. From the narratives presented in this volume it is evident that extra-ordinary girls and women are at the forefront of driving gender equality in sport in Africa. In this volume the stories of selected girls and women have been told. There are many more unsung heroines out there in Africa using physical activity and sport to make a difference in the quality of lives of fellow Africans. Although it is not possible to include each and every inspirational story, we recognise and salute their contributions. Collectively all the efforts will make a difference,

it will create a critical mass that could eventually tip the scales in favour of gender equality for girls and women and sport.

### **The way forward?**

Africa and the world need practical tools to achieve the goal of gender equality in society and sport. The approach to drive behaviour change on macro and micro level for gender equality in women and sport should continue to involve individuals, communities as well as systems and structures.

On individual level Africa continues to need inspirational mothers, teachers, daughters, pioneers, trailblazers, advocats, female journalists and researchers to infuse the message of gender equality in sport throughout families, villages, towns and cities. On community level Africa needs to sustain flagship projects for example MYSA, Moving the Goalposts and initiate more sport-for-development opportunities close to the homes of girls and women. On system and structural levels Africa needs to ensure that the principles and values of global and regional declarations and policies are implemented and institutionalised visibly in communities while at the same time safeguarding our African identity.



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