

Study on Sport, Gender and Development in Africa

Kenya summary

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Introduction

Context of the study

While research on gender dynamics in sport is increasing, particularly in Europe and North America, very few multidisciplinary studies have focused on the practice of sport by women and girls in Africa. Multidimensional research analyzing the specific socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers faced by women in their access to sport seems essential to fill this gap. The participation of women in projects, programs, and policies in the sports sector is also insufficient to ensure that their needs and expectations are taken into account.

In this context, AFD entrusted PWC, in partnership with IRIS and Women Sports Africa, with the task of conducting an innovative study in 2020-2021: Sport, Gender and Development in Africa. This study is central to two increasing objectives for AFD: the fight for gender equality and women's empowerment, and the use of sport as a lever for sustainable development. Addressing the place of women in sport refers in a much broader way to the fundamental right of women to have control over their bodies. Being physically active and playing sport provides benefits at the personal level (in terms of health, resistance, self-confidence,...) and at the community level (in terms of social cohesion, economic development,...). However, there are still many obstacles and persistent inequalities.

Some of these issues are common to all African countries (and even the world). However, the socio-cultural specificities, as well as the sporting history of the various countries investigated (South Africa, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, and Senegal), must be taken into account in order to develop the most effective actions possible for each context. AFD will thus be able to focus its funding on relevant, innovative, and impactful programs and projects.

Inequality in sport: a global reality

Discrimination and gender inequality in sport is a reality that concerns all countries, in Africa but also in Europe, with nuances depending on the context and the solutions provided by local authorities. Family responsibilities are a good example: taking care of children is a barrier to the practice of sport all over the world, but it is even more restrictive when there are many children, and when there is no support system.

The lack of data

Quantitative data is a key requirement for developing effective policies and programs but it is scarce, insufficiently exploited and disseminated. However, this trend is beginning to change. For instance, the Sports Department of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in Morocco is initiating the consolidation of data from the Royal Federations, stimulated by the implementation of Gender Responsive Budgeting. Other factors also need to be addressed in order not to consider women as a homogeneous category.

Violence is still taboo

Violence against women and girls in sport, whether verbal, psychological, sexual, or physical, remains taboo. This trend is changing way too slowly even if some actors are dealing with the issue. For example, in South Africa, associations like Grassroot Soccer implement safe spaces. In Egypt, there are similar spaces with the "Girl Power" program. In Kenya, awareness campaigns to prevent forced marriage and female circumcision are broadcast during cricket matches. Morocco adopted legislation to tackle violence against women in 2018.

Governance issues

Women's participation in the governance of the sector is necessary to take into account gender inequalities and to fight against discrimination. The low proportion of women in the technical and administrative management of sport remains an obstacle to the emergence of sport for all. Informal practices imposed by men such as cooptation, late meetings, and influence games maintain this trend but these habits can be stopped. Incentives or constraining measures are being implemented to support the actors in these transformations. In Kenya, legislation requires a 30% quota for women in the composition of sports federation committees and commissions. However, implementation is slow to become widespread.

The role of the media in tackling discrimination and inequality

The media shape opinion, particularly in sport, which is a popular and spectacular sector. However, sportswomen are still not sufficiently represented in general or specialized media which perpetuate sexist stereotypes about women's bodies and a very gender-based vision of sport. For example, in Morocco, a former woman champion was questioned on the radio about her clothes, which were considered outrageous... Since then, the regulatory body has dealt with the issue. For instance, by announcing a temporary on-air suspension after misogynistic statements by a prominent presenter in 2019. At the same time, the growing visibility and diversity of sportswomen reinforce an inclusive vision of sport, in which all girls and women would find their place.

Inappropriate infrastructure

Sports facilities are scarce and poorly distributed across countries and are rarely adapted to the specific needs of women, who aren't perceived as a priority group. This is visible in their design (changing rooms, sanitary facilities, etc.) and their management (special facilities, adapted opening hours, etc.). However, there is momentum towards inclusive infrastructures. For instance, in Morocco, private companies provide major cities with women-only gyms associated with childcare services. To go further, bringing major infrastructures up to international standards in parallel with the development of local infrastructures by local authorities could have a driving effect.

The importance of school

From primary to university level, schools are a powerful vehicle for the development of the practice of sports by girls in Africa. Indeed, it is through sport in schools that young girls discover sport for the first time. School provides a universal, safe and equal environment for the practice of sport. Awareness-raising and education through sport are essential because school is the first place for the empowerment of girls and the emergence of inclusive and equal generations. However, it is necessary to encourage the continuation of sport after the school years. For example, Kenya's National Education Strategic Plan includes the creation of special schools for sports talent to enable them to start and continue their sporting careers.

Prospects:

Inequalities and discrimination remain significant, but there is a real awareness at different levels that is starting to change trends. There is reluctance and change is taking time, as is social transformation. The stakes are high: the place of women in the sport sector is a reflection of their place in society in general, and its improvement will contribute to a more global improvement of women's rights and the other way around. For example, the professionalization and improvement of the economic conditions of female sportswomen contribute to their empowerment, just as economic empowerment can allow them to access sport activities more easily. Thus, initiatives promoting women's football in Morocco are to be welcomed and should be generalized.

Changing the role of women necessarily impacts the role of men and the image of masculinity. Men have a decisive responsibility to embody positive masculinity that promotes equal values promoting gender diversity.

Civil society, the private sector, and top sportswomen and men are taking new initiatives. They reveal the awareness of a part of the population and actors in the sport sector of the issues of gender equality. To go further, proactive actions will be needed, driven by a shared vision of investing in sport in a gender-equitable way.

Kenya



In Kenya, the practice of sports is gradually becoming more widespread for girls and women, thanks to the support of public authorities, private actors, and of the civil society.

The Kenyan Constitution recognizes equality between women and men in terms of political, economic, cultural, and social rights and opportunities. In particular, it prohibits discrimination based on gender. Government programs such as Kenya Vision 2030 and private initiatives work towards gender equality in sport and the promotion of sport for women, whether competitive or leisure, amateur or professional.

At the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, out of the 85 athletes in the Kenyan delegation, the majority (49/85) were women.

For example, " Breaking the Silence " , a project from the Horn of Africa Development association and supported by FIFA, aims to use football to create a trusting environment for young girls who have been victims of genital mutilation, rape, and forced marriage. Moving the Goalposts association uses football to change attitudes towards the role of women in Kenya in order to empower women and work towards gender equality. The Box Girls organization contributes to women's sports by teaching boxing to girls from marginalized backgrounds, while also providing working groups on life skills such as decision-making, confidence, and leadership. Finally, some communities such as the Maasai, use cricket to advocate for women's place in Kenyan society and raise awareness about forced marriage and female circumcision.

In Kenya, sport is mostly practiced by men, but women's participation is increasing in various sports and team sports especially. A survey conducted in Nairobi shows that out of 100 female athletes, 24 play basketball, 24 play volleyball, 20 play hockey, 19 play netball, and 13 play handball. Moreover, women are increasingly present in traditionally male-dominated sports such as football, rugby, boxing, and taekwondo. However, the choice of sports practiced by girls and women remains highly influenced by gender stereotypes and perceptions of the sports. Age is also a key determinant of women's participation in sports. Younger women participate more in sports with physical contact (basketball and handball) than older women. The presence of women in high-level sport has grown steadily. Since 2000, they have made up at least 40% of the Kenyan delegation to the Olympics, compared to 10% between 1956 and 1988.

Women are becoming more and more active on the playing field, but there is still a lot to be done regarding their involvement in the governing institutions. Indeed, the only meaningful gender regulation is the 30% quota rule on the election and composition of committees and commissions of sports federations. However, the authorities have adopted only superficial measures such as co-opting women into positions of no responsibility. Admittedly, the current Minister of Sports, Culture, and Heritage is a woman. However, the composition of the Ministry and the sports federations confirm that women are not well represented in Kenyan sports governance. Social (lack of leadership skills), political (gender bias in the appointment of sports officials, lack of mutual aid among women), and economic

(lack of financial support for women in sport) factors cause the absence of women in leadership positions in sports organizations. The lack of gender diversity also affects technical sports management although women now tend to move into this sector almost as much as men. In 2019, out of the 10,064 people entering specialized training in human physical performance and leisure, 4,976 were women.

In Kenya, sportswomen, including elite sportswomen, do not receive fair coverage of their performances because of the dominance of men in the media. Men determine the standards of coverage for women's sports. This negatively shapes the view of women's participation in sport, reduces its attractiveness, and prevents girls from having female role models. Increasing the number of female sports journalists may reduce these problems, provided that they are made aware of the need to combat gender stereotypes.

Incentives on the sports offer exist to encourage girls' sports participation. For example:

- The economic development of sports companies promoting the practice of sports by educated-middle class women
- The positive impact of women's rights movements
- The model role of women champions

However, there are still many obstacles to sport offer:

- An insufficient commitment of public actors to promote women's sport, due to insufficient budgets and attention
- A highly dispersed sport ecosystem that has not made it possible to scale up women's sport, due to mistrust of public authorities
- The poor quality of the infrastructure, not adapted to the specific needs of women, and used almost exclusively by men
- A lack of women's participation in governance bodies limiting the consideration of women's practical needs and strategic interests
- Inequalities in access to education that prevent the initiation of sport at school for girls from modest and rural backgrounds
- Less economic and professional opportunities in the sports sector for women, such as wage inequalities
- Gender-based violence in sport remains a taboo subject due to the absence of a government policy and code of conduct to guide the appointment and behavior of the national team and club officials, poor awareness of these issues, and lack of support for victims

Regarding the demand for sport, many obstacles can also be highlighted, such as:

- The domestic activities, mostly carried out by women
- Lack of economic autonomy and limited participation in the formal economy
- Cultural obstacles such as marriage, and the birth of the first child
- Religious interpretations unsuited to the sporting environment
- Socio-cultural norms present sport as a masculine universe incompatible with the "decency" expected of women and girls
- Genital mutilation compromises sports practice because of the pain.
- Difficult handling of menstrual hygiene (budget issues, lack of clean sanitary facilities or private spaces) makes it harder to practice sports after puberty
- The COVID-19 health crisis and economic disruption are steering women towards income-generating activities

Despite the difficulties faced by Kenyan sportswomen, concrete actions by public and private actors and civil society would foster the development of women's sports. There are many levers, particularly in terms of media coverage, representation in governance bodies, protection of women victims of violence, and access to sports facilities.

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