



## **Report on Violence Against Women and Girls in Sport**

Les Femmes, la Force du Changement NGO

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Les Femmes, la Force du Changement (FFC) NGO appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls to the UN General Assembly on violence against women and girls in sport. Our organization is committed to promoting gender equality and advocating for the rights and well-being of women and girls around the world.

### **Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls in Sport**

Women and girls in sports may experience physical violence, including but not limited to, physical abuse, sexual assault, and harassment by coaches, peers, or other individuals in positions of authority.

Psychological abuse such as bullying, intimidation, and emotional manipulation can occur within sporting environments, impacting the mental health and well-being of female athletes.

Disparities in opportunities, sponsorships, and access to resources perpetuate economic violence against women and girls in sports, limiting their potential for success and advancement.

Female athletes are increasingly vulnerable to online harassment and cyberbullying, which can have detrimental effects on their self-esteem and confidence.

Structural discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation contributes to the marginalization and vulnerability of women and girls in sports.

## **Violations of Human Rights**

**Right to Safety and Security:** Women and girls in sports have the fundamental right to participate in athletics in a safe and secure environment. When they are exposed to violence or the risk of violence, this right is violated. For example:

Physical violence such as sexual assault or harassment by coaches or teammates can create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, hindering women and girls' ability to fully engage in sports activities.

Psychological abuse, such as verbal intimidation or emotional manipulation, undermines the mental well-being and confidence of female athletes, impacting their enjoyment and participation in sports.

**Right to Physical and Mental Health:** Violence in sports can have profound consequences on the physical and mental health of women and girls. When athletes are subjected to abuse or harassment, their right to health is compromised. For instance:

Physical violence, including overtraining or pushing beyond physical limits, can lead to injuries, chronic pain, and long-term health issues.

Psychological violence, such as bullying or coercion, can result in anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders, affecting athletes' overall well-being and performance.

## **Principal Causes of Violence Against Women and Girls in Sports**

The hierarchical structure within sports organizations often fosters an environment where individuals in positions of power, such as coaches or team captains, exert control over athletes, leading to abuse and exploitation. For example:

A coach's authority over their athletes may be misused to manipulate or coerce them into engaging in inappropriate or harmful behavior.

Athletes may feel pressured to comply with abusive conduct out of fear of reprisal or losing opportunities for advancement in their sport.

Certain cultural norms and attitudes within the sporting community perpetuate harmful practices that contribute to violence against women and girls. This normalization of abuse can include:

The acceptance of aggressive or hostile behavior as part of the competitive nature of sports, leading to the trivialization of violence against female athletes.

Stereotypical beliefs about gender roles and expectations, such as the idea that women are less capable or deserving of respect in sports, which can lead to discrimination and mistreatment.

Inadequate mechanisms for monitoring and addressing instances of violence within sports organizations contribute to a culture of impunity, where perpetrators are not held accountable for their actions. For instance:

Failure to enforce codes of conduct or disciplinary measures against individuals found guilty of abusive behavior enables the perpetuation of violence within sports.

Lack of transparency in investigations or reluctance to report incidents of violence due to fear of retaliation further exacerbates the problem and perpetuates a cycle of abuse.

## **Recommendations**

### Education and Training:

Implement mandatory training programs on gender equality, diversity, and inclusion for coaches, athletes, and sports administrators. For instance, sports organizations can collaborate with gender equality experts to develop training modules that address issues such as power dynamics, consent, and respectful communication.

### Policy Development:

Develop and enforce comprehensive policies and protocols to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in sports. For example, sports federations can establish clear guidelines for reporting incidents of abuse, outlining the steps for investigation and disciplinary action.

### Representation and Participation:

Ensure meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making processes within sports organizations. For instance, establish advisory committees or task forces comprised of female athletes and advocates to provide input on policies and initiatives aimed at addressing gender-based violence in sports.

### Support Services:

Establish accessible and confidential support services for survivors of violence in sports. This could include setting up helplines, counseling services, and legal assistance programs specifically tailored to meet the needs of female athletes who have experienced abuse.

### Accountability Mechanisms:

Implement robust accountability mechanisms to hold perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions. For example, sports organizations can conduct independent investigations into

allegations of abuse and impose sanctions, such as suspension or expulsion, for individuals found guilty of misconduct.

#### Awareness-Raising Campaigns:

Launch public awareness-raising campaigns to challenge harmful stereotypes and promote a culture of respect and equality within the sporting community. This could involve using social media, sports events, and educational resources to educate athletes, coaches, and fans about the importance of preventing violence against women and girls in sports.

#### Collaboration and Partnerships:

Foster collaboration and partnerships between sports organizations, government agencies, civil society groups, and other stakeholders to address the root causes of violence against women and girls in sports. For instance, establish multi-sectoral task forces or working groups to develop coordinated strategies and initiatives for preventing and responding to gender-based violence in sports.

#### Research and Data Collection:

Invest in research and data collection efforts to better understand the prevalence, causes, and consequences of violence against women and girls in sports. This could involve conducting surveys, focus groups, and interviews with athletes, coaches, and other stakeholders to gather information on their experiences and perspectives.

#### Legal Reform:

Advocate for legal reforms to strengthen protections for women and girls in sports and hold perpetrators of violence accountable under the law. This could include lobbying for the enactment of legislation that criminalizes acts of abuse and harassment in sports and ensures survivors have access to justice and reparations.

#### Long-Term Prevention Strategies:

Develop long-term prevention strategies to address the underlying factors contributing to violence against women and girls in sports. This could involve addressing systemic inequalities, such as gender-based discrimination and economic disparities, through policy reforms and social interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and social inclusion in sports.

Stakeholders can work together to create a safer and more equitable environment for women and girls in sports, free from violence and discrimination.

FFC calls for urgent action to address the pervasive issue of violence against women and girls in sports. By working together, we can create a safe and inclusive sporting environment where all individuals can thrive and fulfill their potential.

The pervasive issue of violence against women and girls in sports demands urgent and decisive action from all stakeholders. As we have outlined, the various forms of violence, ranging from physical to economic, constitute flagrant violations of fundamental human rights. The structural causes of this violence, rooted in power imbalances, cultural norms, and systemic inequalities, must be addressed head-on.

To effect meaningful change, we call for a comprehensive approach that encompasses education, policy reform, accountability mechanisms, and collaboration among all sectors of society. It is imperative that sports organizations, governments, civil society groups, and the international community work together to create a safe and inclusive sporting environment where women and girls can thrive without fear of violence or discrimination.

By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, accompanied by concrete examples and best practices, we can pave the way for a future where every female athlete can pursue her passion for sports with dignity, equality, and respect. Let us seize this opportunity to champion the rights and well-being of women and girls in sports and build a legacy of empowerment for generations to come.

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