



COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

7 May 2024

MS. REEM ALSALEM

Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais Wilson
52 rue des Pâquis
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland

SUBJECT : Request for Inputs on Violence Against Women and Girls in Sports

Dear **Ms. Alsalem**:

Greetings from the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines!

We write in relation to the request on *Call for inputs from the Secretariat of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls in Sports*, for the preparation of their next thematic report to the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA79) in October 2024.

We received the request belatedly but we hope that your office can still consider this submission in your future reports.

As of date, the Commission has yet to obtain independent data on *violence against women and girls in sports*. However, the Commission calls for the government to look into the following issues and practices that may negatively impact the human rights of women and girls in sports:

1. *Barriers that hinder participation of women and girls in sports* - In a 2023 survey,¹ the following issues came to light:
 - a. **misconceptions about sports being “gendered”**: A number of respondents still hold onto outdated beliefs that certain sports are more suitable for men, while others are more appropriate for women. This perception limits the opportunities for women and girls to explore and excel in various sports disciplines, reinforcing gender stereotypes and discouraging their participation.
 - b. **traditional Filipino stereotypes of women**: Deep-rooted cultural norms and traditional gender roles in Filipino society often dictate that women should prioritize domestic responsibilities over sports and physical activities. These stereotypes perpetuate the idea that sports are more

¹Go, B., GMA News Online, *Let Her Play: Women’s sports are on a roll in the Philippines, but there are barriers still keeping girls from participating*. published 2023. available at <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/specials/content/243/let-her-play/> (last accessed 29 April 2024).

aligned with masculinity, leading to societal pressures and discouragement for women and girls to engage in sports.

- c. **sexualization of women in sports:** Female athletes frequently face objectification and sexualization, both in media representation and within sports culture. This focus on their physical appearance and attractiveness detracts from their athletic achievements and can create barriers to participation by making women and girls feel uncomfortable or vulnerable in sports environments.

In a panel discussion² organised in 2023, Filipina athletes highlighted inequity in sports:

- a. **no career in playing sport:** Hard work and everything that comes with playing a sport by women are not appreciated. Society sees sports as not a serious career for women.
- b. **no recognition and exposure:** Women athletes get around 2-4% of media coverage for competitive sports.
- c. **lack of equal opportunities:** Women athletes are not provided with the same opportunities compared to male athletes in their respective fields. This may translate to lack of recognition of their wins, unequal compensation, support from people, safe space to discuss issues, among others.

2. Cases of physical, sexual, or verbal abuse in sports:

- a. **Monitoring of implementation of mechanisms to protect girls from abuse etc. during the conduct of the *Palarong Pambansa***

In 2012, the Department of Education issued its Child Protection Policy³ “(t)o provide special protection to children who are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances which affect their normal development” and reiterated its “(z)ero tolerance policy for any act of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying and other forms of abuse.” A year after, the Department spearheaded the establishment of the Implementing Rules and Regulations for the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013⁴ to protect learners from acts of bullying.

Republic Act No. 10588⁵ was enacted in 2013 to institutionalise the annual conduct of *Palarong Pambansa*, under the Department of Education, as the country’s premier national sporting event, to “(i)mprove the physical, intellectual and social well-being of the youth.” In 2018, an investigation was conducted on a teacher who allegedly molested a 14-year old athlete in

² Cruz, J. A., *Filipina athletes speak up about inequity in sports*. published 2023. available at <https://www.gmanetwork.com/lifestyle/news/99708/filipina-athletes-speak-up-about-inequity-in-sports/story>, (last accessed 2 May 2024)

³ DepEd Child Protection Policy (Department Order No. 40, s. 2012): A policy and guidelines on *Protecting Children in School from Abuse, Violence, Exploitation, Discrimination, Bullying and Other Forms of Abuse* established by the Department of Education. It outlines the duties and responsibilities of the different offices of the said government agency, the school and its personnel, the pupils, students, and learners, the establishment of the Child Protection Committee, the preventive measures to address child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination and bullying and other acts of abuse, the protection and remedial measures, and the rules and procedure in handling child abuse, exploitation, violence and discrimination cases.

⁴ *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) No. 10627 Otherwise known as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013* (Department Order No. 55, s. 2013). A law defining the act of bullying and the prohibited acts, mandating the adoption of anti-bullying policies in schools, providing for the prevention and intervention programs to address bullying, and the mechanisms and procedures in handling bullying incidents in schools.

⁵ *Palarong Pambansa Act of 2013*. 27 May 2013.

Ilocos Sur.⁶ In response to the incident, the Department of Education created a child protection committee *to safeguard the welfare of athletes in the future conduct of Palarong Pambansa*.⁷ Efforts to ensure the protection of student athletes from abuse and violence were intensified with the implementation of the Child Protection Policy through the creation of the Child Protection Unit and Child Rights Education Desks.⁸ After the 2023 Palarong Pambansa, the Learner Rights and Protection Desk, responsible for implementing the Learners Rights and Protection Guidelines in the Conduct of Sports Events⁹ and Learners Athletes Safeguarding Guidelines,¹⁰ among others, was established.

Data on the number of girl athletes who experienced abuse and violence during the conduct of the annual *Palarong Pambansa* is not publicly available.

We wish to call the attention of the government as to how mechanisms embodied in the above-mentioned laws and issuances are being implemented. Further, there is a need for monitoring whether these cases are being resolved, and how incidences of abuse affect policies in relation to the conduct of the *Palarong Pambansa*.

We thank your office for regularly including the Commission in the correspondences and requests for inputs relevant to the State's engagement with international human rights mechanisms.

For questions or clarifications regarding this letter, please reach out to the Policy Advisory Office through email at policyadvisoryofc@chr.gov.ph with copy to iomdiv@chr.gov.ph.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,



ATTY. FAYDAH M. DUMARPA
Officer-in-Charge
Commissioner
Commission on Human Rights

⁶ Dullana, R., Rappler, *DepEd probes teacher who allegedly molested Palaro athlete*. published 2018. available at <https://www.rappler.com/sports/palarong-pambansa/200660-deped-probes-teacher-who-allegedly-molested-paloro-athlete/> (last accessed 2 May 2024).

⁷ Lucena, G.J., Rappler, *DepEd creates child protection committee for Palarong Pambansa*. published 2018. available at <https://www.rappler.com/sports/200889-child-protection-committee-palarong-pambansa/> (last accessed 2 May 2024).

⁸ Creation of the Child Protection Unit and the Child Rights in Education Desk in the Department of Education (Department Order No. 003, s. 2021). A policy on the creation of two separate but coordinating mechanisms, the Child Protection Unit in order to strengthen the implementation of the DepEd Child Protection Policy, and the Child Rights Education Desk in order to ensure that rights of the child in basic education are respected, protected, promoted, and fulfilled in and by the Department.

⁹ DepEd Memorandum OUOPS2024-05-00946 dated 5 February 2024. An internal memorandum operationalizing the Learner Rights and Protection Desk (LRPD), specifically in schools, through the Child Protection Committees or the Learner Rights and Protection Committees (LRPC) where playing venues and billeting quarters for the conduct of the *Palarong Pambansa* will be situated.

¹⁰ As mentioned in DepEd Memorandum OUOPS2024-05-00946 dated 5 February 2024. Internal issuance which shall serve as guidance in the protocols for handling reported learner-athlete concerns.