

# Women in Sport

## Overview

Gender equality is a critical driver of social development. While significant progress has been made in advancing gender equality in sport, women and girls (W&Gs) still face significant barriers and discrimination. Opportunities exist for policy makers to address these challenges face on, advancing the equality agenda in both sport and beyond.

### Importance

### Outcomes



**UN Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality**



#### ECONOMIC

- Engage half of potential workforce
- Increase capability and skills across workforce
- Boost productivity in organisations with diverse teams
- Increase earnings for women through higher educational attainment



#### HEALTH

- Reduce risk and prevalence of chronic diseases
- Build healthy life choices
- Improve mental health & well-being



#### SOCIAL

- Increase social cohesion through inclusion of W&G
- Empower W&Gs e.g. build confidence, resilience
- Improve skills e.g. teamwork, decision making
- Inspire W&Gs through creating role models
- Increase educational attainment for W&Gs
- Challenge societal stereotypes e.g. body image
- Drive broader social change around gender equality through powerful platform of sport



#### REPUTATION

- Boost international reputation of social development

## Challenges

Understanding the root cause of the challenges for women and girls in sport is essential to develop targeted solutions

- Poor professionalisation driven by limited resources, poor athlete support and out-of-date operating models
- Underrepresentation and stereotyping in the media due to lack of female journalists and historic attitudes
- Mental health concerns and safeguarding challenges from poor governance and unsuitable policies
- Unequal prize money and salaries due to poor cases of investment often compounded by limited data & insights
- Lower levels of physical literacy in girls given unstructured physical education syllabus and social attitudes
- Lower levels of activity in W&Gs due to limited access, targeted programming and visibility of opportunities
- Drop-out from sports because of insufficient infrastructure and support during motherhood
- Insufficient safeguarding policies and measures to address ongoing physical, sexual and verbal harassment
- Insufficient representation at leadership driven by limited role models and pathway visibility
- Unequal career opportunities and pay from discrimination, bias and prejudices
- Lack of reporting procedures and consequences to address discrimination in the workplace

*4% of global sport coverage is of women's sport*

*~45% of athletes have experienced abuse<sup>1</sup>*

*1 in 3 women are inactive worldwide<sup>2</sup>*

*~25% of coaches in Europe are female<sup>3</sup>*

*8% of sports journalists are female*

1: Research suggests on average 40%-50% of athletes have experiences anything from mild harassment to severe abuse; 2: Based on WHO guidelines for physical activity, in comparison to 1 in 4 men; 3: Estimated 20%-30%. Sources: The UN; The Women's Sports Foundation; The Guardian; Clearing House for Sport; Child Help; Desk research; Expert consultation; Portas analysis

## Portas Thinking

### PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT ACROSS THE LIFECYCLE

LIFE STAGE	SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE	REPRESENTATION & ROLE MODELS	ACCESS & OPPORTUNITIES	ATTITUDES & BEHAVIOURS
<b>FORMATIVE</b> Nurturing aspirations and interests	Physical literacy and foundational skills	Visible inspiration in all areas of sport	Access to PE and safe play	Positive attitudes and inclusive behaviours
<b>DEVELOPMENTAL</b> Turning dreams into reality	Confidence, interest and capability	Visible career trajectories and active lives	Access to holistic and flexible development pathways	Positive perceptions towards women in sport
<b>PERFORMING</b> Maximising potential and progressing through a career path	Skills, expertise and leadership	Equal representation in leadership	Continued opportunities to participate and develop	Respectful attitudes and behaviours towards female leaders

Elite

Grassroots

Workforce

Industry

Leadership

*Applies to all aspects of the sporting ecosystem*

## Case Study

Mauritius undertook targeted initiatives to increase W&Gs participation across the country

Situation	Actions	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20% of women in Mauritius have Type II Diabetes</li> <li>Females are 35% less active than men</li> <li>There is a 33% drop in activity for females in their thirties</li> <li>Females are 18% more willing than males to become active despite lower participation rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed strategy to target women and girls</li> <li>Created strategic partnerships with ministries based on aligned interests e.g. Ministry of Gender Equality, Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sport &amp; Recreation, Women’s Sport Commission</li> <li>Introduced targeted participation programmes, facilities and campaigns e.g. start to dance, walking groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~2000 females taking part in walking classes in first cycle with ~70% coverage across the island (2018)</li> <li>~500 females taking part in dance classes in first cycle (2018)</li> <li>Females cited improved sleep, health, motivation, empowerment and reduced boredom</li> <li>Developing female coaches and volunteers to run community programmes</li> </ul>

## Takeaways

Policy makers have many levers at their disposal to tackle these issues for W&Gs head on

- Ringfence appropriate **government budget and resources** to deliver **women-specific initiatives**
- Adopt a **data-driven approach** to understand **motivations, barriers and unique challenges** to women in sport
- Review **governance processes** to ensure adequate **female representation** in leadership positions across sporting ecosystem
- Ensure women’s initiatives are **integrated** with top-down strategy and **communicated** to all stakeholders to maximise impact
- Understand how driving gender equality can **benefit strategic partners** to unlock **collaborations and partnerships**
- Demonstrate **case for investment** for women in sport to the **private sector** to turbocharge growth

Sources: Mauritius Sports Council; Desk research; Expert consultation; Portas analysis