

THE GLOBAL OBSERVATORY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND SPORT

Towards Inclusive Gender Equality in Sport Research and Action (ReAct) Recommendations for Stakeholders

2023

Introduction to GOGES Research and Action Strategy

Bringing together a global network of experts and expertise, we provide game-changing and globally accessible research and knowledge, open inclusive spaces for dialogue among individuals, institutions including sport organisations, and governments. We foster the understanding and engagement essential to close knowledge gaps and accelerate gender equality for all girls and women in sport and through physical education, physical activity and sport.

The Global Observatory is first and foremost a convener. The Global Observatory aims to convene experts, actors and affected people within sport to share knowledge and engage in dialogue that can help progress gender equality in sport. The ways in which the Global Observatory will promote and progress inclusive gender equality are:

- **Deepen research** by identifying the gaps that need to be filled and translate to broader audiences
- **Consult** with experts and the knowledge that is produced and distill it to be useful for the global sport community
- **Facilitate** exploration on topics that have been challenging to address or where there is a gap in knowledge
- Build a **community** of researchers around the world to contribute to diversity of knowledge and data generation and analysis

In the current phase of the work of the Global Observatory, the focus is on three key topics selected based on consultations with experts and key actors in gender equality in sport where more knowledge, discussion and research are needed. These three topics form the priority themes for the first Research and Action (REACT) initiatives. The Global Observatory will also undertake initiatives on other themes, these are the initial focus. These REACT themes are **gender-based violence, active and supportive families**, and **inclusive gender equality**. In these Recommendations for Research Action, we focus on inclusive gender equality as it is a cross cutting concern that also informs the context of the other two themes.

Experts who were consulted during the development of the Global Observatory focus priorities emphasized the urgency for the sport community to better understand and engage in dialogue about *inclusive gender equality*. Actors across the sport ecosystem including federations and policy makers have articulated the need for support and for a way in which to better understand how to be inclusive in gender equality. In the role of convener and facilitator, GOGES is in a unique position to be able to facilitate conversation between diverse actors in the sport community on topics that have been difficult and conflictual in the past. For this reason, it was determined that the first meaningful topic for the first

convening hosted by GOGES would be *Inclusive Gender Equality*, this set of recommendations is one of the outputs.

What is Inclusive Gender Equality?

Inclusive Gender Equality

Towards a sport ecosystem and society that values the notion of an inclusive gender equality, paying attention to intersectionalities and integrating a complex yet inclusive lens that appreciates and embraces girls and women in all their diversity – race, class, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, geographical location etc.

The Global Observatory frames inclusive gender equality as working toward gender equality from a perspective that visibilizes and includes people who have been marginalized and excluded from women's sport due to varying and intersectional discriminations. We have seen and heard from partners that many women are still marginalized, discriminated against and excluded from sport. This includes, but is not limited to, women athletes with disabilities, athletes from countries in LMIC who access to resources for training do not have, women who are excluded for wearing hijab, women in regions with enduring conflict and climate crisis, and transgender and DSD athletes who are left without spaces to compete or even participate in sport. On the global level of women's sport there are inequalities that exist and that have not been addressed sufficiently within previous actions to address gender inequality in sport.

The world of sport has made great strides in terms of gender equality and there are many powerful allies in this space, but there is so much left to do. When we talk about gender equality in sport and women in sport and sport leadership, we should be asking the question: Which women? If we are not moving toward equality in sport for ALL women, then we are aiming for the right goal. For the Global Observatory, inclusive gender equality means that we bring this question to the forefront. We aim to be inclusive of women of all ethnic and minority backgrounds, of all abilities, religions, nationalities, sexualities and gender identities.

The importance of an intersectional and inclusive approach to gender equality was emphasized by the IOC in their support for the European Union (EU) High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport's 2022 report entitled "Towards More Gender Equality in Sport." The report outlines an action plan for the EU Commission, EU governments, sports organisations and civil society groups involved in sport. The IOC agrees with the report about "the need to adopt an intersectional approach to gender equality action to address the multiple forms of discrimination – based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc. – that women in sport may face. Inequalities that impact LGBTQ+ communities practicing sport are particularly considered."¹

It is recognized that there is a great need for guidance for sport federations², community sport organisations³ and schools on inclusive gender equality policy and practice. This was therefore the first theme that the Global Observatory convened about was inclusive gender equality because of the

¹ "IOC welcomes new EU report setting out action plan to achieve gender equality in sport" 15 March 2022: <https://olympics.com/IOC/news/new-EU-report-sets-out-action-plan-to-achieve-gender-equality-in-sport>

² Martowitz et al (2023) [Position statement: IOC framework on fairness, inclusion and non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sex variations](#)

³ Sport New Zealand (2022) [Guiding Principles for the Inclusion of Transgender People in Community Sport](#)

urgency for guidance and sharing of knowledge within the sport community. This does not mean that this is the only focus of the Global Observatory, or that it is prioritized above the other areas of work that the Global Observatory will address, but as an urgent need was expressed by sport institutions and federations to have a better understanding and more guidance on implementing inclusion within sport, GOGES responded to this need by hosting a first convening on the topic of inclusive gender equality.

Call for Research and Action

In this call for research and action, we present the actions that our key stakeholders have highlighted as the most urgent to progress inclusive gender equality in sport.

Consultations

This set of Recommendations for Research and Action has been developed by the Global Observatory team and consulting experts following the discussions, consultations and presentations that took place between August 2022 and June 2023. In September 2022, the Global Observatory consulted with two community sports groups in Southern Africa to gain their insights on the dimensions of sport regulations that affect them and their views on recommended actions. In 2023, two events were hosted in collaboration with Le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), University of Lausanne (UNIL) and WomenSport International (WSI); on January 31, a closed-door meeting of experts drawn from research institutions, women's international networks, and civil society organisations, athletes, UN and international sport bodies convened to deliberate on developments in the sports sector regarding inclusion with a focus on inclusion of transwomen, girls and women with innate variations in sex characteristics in physical education, physical activity and sport. This was followed by an open conference on 1st February 2023 at which a broad range of actors presented research and discussed multiple intersecting issues affecting inclusive gender equality in sport. Further consultations were undertaken through interviews with key experts after these two events.

Key messages

Stakeholders agree that physical education, physical activity and sport needs to be safe and accessible for all people. In the context of elite sport, there are policy developments that are implemented towards an idea of inclusion and fairness. However, there are groups that are marginalized as result of these interventions and due to complex interactions with racism, (dis)ability, gender diversity, resource inequality (including migrant populations, global income inequalities, and hierarchies of sports among other considerations. Although there is growing research on gender inclusion, there are indeed significant gaps in data and knowledge across disciplines of study. Some gaps include methodological approaches, geographic representation of data and contexts, focus areas such as policy, practice, level of sport among other considerations. This is an opportunity for ensuring appropriate resources are availed for research programmes across the world to address the inequalities arising out of differences in power, conceptualization of inclusion and the resulting policy and program decisions and rules.

Who should act?

This call to action is directed at all actors across the sports ecosystem including governance, media, researchers, administrators, athletes, technical officials, regulatory bodies, schools, state entities, human rights agencies and advocates. The Global Observatory also takes these actions as important to its strategic direction and priorities. These areas of action are not all encompassing, yet they offer opportunities for actors to proactively address gaps and a chance to collaborate with others.

Recommendations for Stakeholder Research and Action

Action 1: Develop educational resources for grassroots sport organisations, federations and sport institutions on terminology and policies for gender inclusivity and taking an intersectional approach.

Action 2: Promote and resource quality research about the need for inclusive gender equality policies and the real lived experience of diverse women athletes across geographic contexts.

Action 3: Develop a benchmarking tool that can be used by international federations, sports bodies and community organisations that is aligned with standards related to gender equality, human rights, inclusion and fairness.

Action 4: Gather good practices on intersectional approaches to sports delivery in grassroots and high-performance contexts and share it to facilitate learning and access to support.

Action 5: Continue the development of research and evidence that supports fair and inclusive policies in sport and accounts for contextual realities including state policies, legal and cultural frameworks.

Action 6: Advocate for greater accountability in terms of inclusion by sport Federations, media, and governing bodies; impacts of gender policies and practices, and justice for athletes.

Action 7: Send out clear and coherent messages about inclusive gender equality policies and practices across all aspects of sport and amplify the voices of athletes and actors who are essential to gender equality in sport.

Action 8: Be accountable to grassroots sport and to athletes, understand their realities and provide support for inclusive gender equality.

Action 9: Sustain ongoing collaboration and sharing between multisector stakeholders on how we are doing inclusive gender equality.

Action 10: Document and track the shifts in policy and practice around the world that have a positive or negative impact on inclusive gender equality in sport across all levels of participation.

The Global Observatory Actions

In collaboration with key partners, the Global Observatory will:

- Convene stakeholders across the sport ecosystem to facilitate further understanding of inclusive gender equality and to generate points of collective action
- Coordinate actions of state and non-state actors towards a coherent movement that makes sport safe and inclusive for girls and women in all their diversity
- Gather and aggregate data and research from around the world to enable global scale monitoring of progress and challenges
- Facilitate access to research evidence, advice, and resources for decision-making and action by policy makers and practitioners
- Support collation of expertise, resources, and tools to contribute to action across the sport ecosystem

Addressing Gaps in Data and Research

The REACT initiative will be the vehicle by which GOGES carries out the strategy to convene, deepen research, consult and facilitate discussions to progress inclusive gender equality in sport. GOGES will invite experts, athletes and actors from the sport community to be part of one or more of the REACT groups. These groups will convene, exchange, and share knowledge that can help the global sport community better understand and take action on different topics in gender equality.

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Contact: Lombe Mwambwa, PhD, Research Director info@goges.org