

HUMAN RIGHTS, RACE AND SPORT*

In July 2017 the Kazan Action Plan (KAP) was adopted "to facilitate international and multi-stakeholder policy convergence, ease international cooperation and foster capacity-building efforts of governmental authorities and sports". Since then, the sports sector globally is unifying and advancing its human rights activities considerably. The UNESCO Chair, IT Tralee, is coordinating work in this domain. We are involved in building mechanisms based on the SDG mantra of 'no-one left behind, starting with the most vulnerable' in the aspiration that policy and investment decisions can be evidence-based, rights-based and led from areas of the most need.

Participation in sport has numerous benefits including promoting health and mental well-being. Being physically active helps to prevent serious conditions, such as type-2 diabetes and obesity. Participation in sports also increases confidence, self-esteem and social skills such as teamwork, leadership and discipline. Studies have shown that those who play sports do better in school [1]



Several United Nations human rights treaties contain articles recognizing sport as a human right. The Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) prohibits discrimination in cultural activities and in access to public places. It bans hate speech including at sporting events. The transformative potential of sport is also facilitated by article 7. These rights also link to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Article 4- Condemns racist propaganda and organisations, and incitement of discrimination and violence



Article 5 - Non-discrimination in civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights including participation in cultural activities and access to places or service for use by the general public.



Article 7 - Measures to combat prejudices through teaching, education, culture and information



When something is a human right it means that everybody is entitled to it, simply by virtue of them being human. However, not everybody is always supported to enjoy these rights equally. Racial discrimination and stereotypes can act as barriers to people's access to sports. Racism towards participants is a significant problem. Globally, over half of football fans (54%) have witnessed racist abuse while watching a football game [2]. For many people when intersecting identities such as gender, disability, income, sexuality, minority status, location, migration status etc., combine, participation can be even harder.

The UN "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework's guiding principles recognise: (a) States' obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights; (b) the role of business enterprises as specialized organs of society, required to comply with all applicable laws and to respect human rights; (c) the need for rights and obligations to be matched to appropriate and effective remedies when breached. In order to promote the protection and respect of human rights in and through sports, tools on engaging with the UN treaties, including CRC, are being prepared for states, National Human Rights Institutions, and civil society organisations, including sports organisations. These tools aim to raise awareness of sport as a human right, to encourage states to take stock or where their policies are and share good practices, and to empower civil society in advocating for sports as a human right.



*"Sport" is being used to reflect physical education, physical activity and sport in this note.

1) Barbara Kotschwar (2014) Women, Sports, and Development: Does it Pay to Let Girls Play?, Peterson Institute for International Economics available at <https://www.piie.com/sites/default/files/publications/pb/pb14-8.pdf>

2) Forza Football (2018), Our report on racism in football. available at <https://blog.forzafootball.com/kick-it-out/>