

HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER AND SPORT*

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". 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 girls who play sports do better in school, suffer fewer health problems, achieve more in areas dominated by men, such as science, and hold better jobs as adults [1]



Several United Nations human rights treaties contain articles recognizing sport as a human right, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). They also contain rights which are necessary for the full enjoyment of the right to sports, such as education including physical education, and rights which participation in sports can contribute to, such as health. These rights also link to the Sustainable Development Goals.



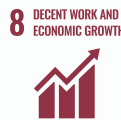
Article 8 - Right to participate at international level



Article 10 - Right to quality education, including physical education



Article 11 - Right to work



Article 12 - Right to health



Article 13 - Right to participate in economic and social life including recreational activities and sports



Article 14 - Rights of rural women, including to take part in all parts of community life



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. Women can face gender stereotypes and cultural barriers to participation in sports. For example, in the UK 38% of 7 year old girls achieve the daily recommended amount of physical activity, compared to 63% of boys.[2] 93% of women with disabilities are inactive at levels that promote health [3]. For many people when intersecting identities such as gender, disability, income, sexuality, minority status, location, migration status etc., combine, participation can become even harder.

The UN "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework's guiding principles recognise: (a) States' obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms; (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 CEDAW, 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 of 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) Lucy J Griffiths et al, (2013) How active are our children? Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study. *Epidemiology*, Vol. 3, No. 8

3) Sun, F., Norman, I. J., & While, A. E. (2013). *Physical activity in older people: a systematic review*. *BMC Public Health*, 13(1), 49. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-449>