**Sample Gender Inclusion Policy**

## Introduction

Sport organizations have a responsibility to those they serve by providing programmes in which the outcomes and impacts are positive and equitable across genders. This ‘duty’ involves not only providing access through gender-sensitive recruitment strategies and all-girls sport teams, but involves careful programme design, facilities such as girls’ dressing rooms, female coaches, community engagement and campaigns to dispel misperceptions and myths, partnerships and ultimately structures that give girls the opportunity become leaders. Creating truly safe and inclusive spaces requires putting the participants at the centre of the process, including defining ‘safe and inclusive’, understanding their rights and participating in the process of ensuring their protection.

***(Insert organization’s name)’s*** policy for gender inclusion outlines four main areas in which policies and procedures must be developed and implemented in order to create an atmosphere that is safe and inclusive for female participants and ensures that both boys and girls have the opportunity to experience the positive impact of sport to its full potential.

**Policy Principles**

Our objective is for girls to have the same opportunity as boys to take part in high-quality sport activities that lead to increased potential for employment.[[1]](#footnote-1) In particular, we:

* Agree that sport must be an activity accessible to everyone in the community, regardless of gender.
* Agree that sport must be an activity that, when facilitated correctly, gives the opportunity for each participant, regardless of gender, to reach their full potential and learn valuable life skills as well as empower themselves through leadership opportunities and personal growth.
* Understand the difference between gender integration (or merely providing access) and gender inclusion and the importance of intentionally designing sport programmes to achieve inclusion.
* Must operate in a safe and secure climate (with safe and secure having multiple meanings) and therefore encourage greater gender inclusion.
* Must develop capacity to address obstacles that prohibit greater and more effective gender inclusion in sport programmes.
* Agree that both girls and boys take an active role in making decisions that affect gender inclusion in the programme.
* Understand that community leaders, organizations and caretakers are actively engaged in supporting greater gender inclusion through establishment of trust in sport programmes as safe places where the needs of their daughters are met.
* Must engage in meaningful partnerships to fill gaps in capacity for address sensitive issues related to adolescent girls.

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| Definitions **Gender[[2]](#footnote-2):** Gender: refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a women or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context.  **Gender equality[[3]](#footnote-3)**concerns women and men, and it involves working with men and boys, women and girls to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviors, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, and in the community. Genuine equality means more than parity in numbers or laws on the books; it means expanding freedoms and improving overall quality of life so that equality is achieved without sacrificing gains for males or females.  **Female empowerment[[4]](#footnote-4)**is achieved when women and girls acquire the power to act freely, exercise their rights, and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society. While empowerment often comes from within, and individuals empower themselves, cultures, societies, and institutions create conditions that facilitate or undermine the possibilities for empowerment.  **Gender inclusion** involves identifying, and then addressing, gender inequalities during project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation so that both boys and girls have equitable access to sport programmes as well as equal opportunity to benefit from the positive outcomes that sport offers. |

**Policies and Processes**

The organization’s policy is divided up into four components that provide a holistic approach to designing and implementing sport programmes :

**Access**: all factors that affect whether girls have access or not to a particular sport programme  
**Design**: whether a sport programme is designed with female participants in mind

**Climate:** all factors that influence an atmosphere of emotional, psychosocial and physical safety and comfort for female participants in the programme

**Mentors**: structures and relationships within the sport programme that give female participants (and female coaches/facilitators) the opportunity to assume leadership roles, increased knowledge and access resources

**Gender Inclusion Officer**

In addition, if resources are available, the organization should recruit and hire a Gender Inclusion Officer, or appoint an existing staff member to that role. This GI Officer will oversee that the organization does its best to follow the policies below and will lead efforts to improve the organization’s gender inclusion strategies. All complaints or reports of violation of this policy should be directed at the Gender Inclusion Officer or the appropriate staff member with this role.

**Promising Practices for Gender Inclusion**

**Access to Sport Programme**

**1. Choosing the sport**

All coaches and facilitators, as well as the organization as a whole must be aware, thoughtful and deliberate when choosing a sport for mixed gender or all female programmes, realizing the impact certain sports could have on the lives of the girls, their ability to participate and how they are viewed in the community. The organization understands that certain sports, while challenging stereotypes, could result in backlash and negative responses from the community, causing girls to drop out or not join.

**2. Misperceptions and prejudices about girls and sports**

The organization strives to research and identify local and cultural misperceptions and prejudices about girls and sports and attempt to dispel those perceptions and ideas in the community through several ways, specifically:

* Education
* Images and female athlete role models
* Engaging the community, caregivers, boys and men
* Safety
* Discussion and motivation

**3. Sports apparel**

The organization must provide proper equipment and sports apparel for female participants in order to ensure their ability to participate and their safety while participating. This includes taking into consideration cultural views, safety and comfort.

**4. Scheduling**

The organization must take into consideration the societal and cultural obligations of girls (that boys often don’t have) when deciding times and days to offer sport programming for females.

**5. Recruitment of participants**

The organization must identify and create strategies to overcome obstacles specific to recruiting girls for sport programmes in their community.

**6. Economic constraints**

The organization must provide a strategy that addresses gender specific economic constraints that may prevent girls from joining a sport program.

**7. Personal safety**

The organization must consider and provide a plan to account for cultural sensitivity and vulnerability surrounding females (especially young adolescent girls) and their personal safety, specifically:

* Safety when traveling to and from programme sites
* Safety during the time of day programmes activities are held
* Safety at-large community events in which males not related to the programme or the participants might be in attendance
* Safety while traveling overnight for tournaments and other programme activities

**8. Participation of trans-gender and intersex players**

The organization must allow players to register for programmes or sport teams using the gender that the participant identifies as and which that participant feels is at the core of their identity. The organization must understand the consequences for the participant that may arise and develop a strategy to address potential negative consequences so that the participants’ protection and inclusion are ensured.

**Design of Sport Programme**

**1. Mixed-gender activities**

The organization must carefully consider the design and intent of mixed-gender programmes in order to ensure that negative gender stereotypes and/or conflicts between genders are not reinforced through the mixed gender sports programme. In addition, all coaches and facilitators must be trained on gender sensitive issues and have a complete understanding of the social distribution of power and social expectations of both genders for the culture in which they are working.

**2. Menstruation and pregnancy**

The organization need to educate girls concerning menstruating, fertility and sports as well as provide necessary means for girls to play while menstruating. This includes educating girls about menstruating, providing sanitary napkins or other hygienic alternatives and providing facilities where girls can wash themselves after they play. The organization also engages girls who are pregnant and young mothers in the sport programme.

**3. Sensitive topics**

The organization must build capacity and create strong partnerships to address sensitive topics related to young adolescent girls. This must be accomplished by training female and male coaches and facilitators on ways to discuss topics like gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, body image and other gender specific topics appropriate in your community. The organization also must create strong partnerships with local community organizations that specialize in GBV and SRHR and who you can refer female participants to or bring into your organization to lead discussions on sensitive issues

**4. Female participant retention**

The organization must identify obstacles that force or encourage girls to leave a sport programme and counter with effective ways to retain them, such as motivation, leadership opportunities, provision of basic needs and scheduling training to fit a girl’s life.

**5. Quality curricula**

The organization, which aims to develop and empower girls, must strive to implement quality, tested curricula that are specifically designed to address issues relevant to female participants to ensure maximum personal growth, community development and societal change. Mixed-gender life skill and SRHR curricula often do not take into consideration the specific needs of adolescent girls.

**6. Training for coaches/facilitators**

The organization must offer training for all staff on how to coach and facilitate in ways that empower girls and help them reach their personal potentials through the learning of new life skills.

**Climate of Sport Programme**

**1. Community Support**

The organization will actively identify, approach, engage and collaborate with relevant community members such as caregivers, community leaders, government/police, donors and funders. The organization will also seek partnerships with other community organizations that specialize in gender inclusion or equality and can consult on policies in procedures that would make the sport programme more inclusive for both boys and girls.

**2. Engaging boys and men**

The organization will engage boys and men as one of many strategies to increase support for gender inclusion in their sport programme.

**3. Space**

*Physical and emotional safe spaces*

The organization must guarantee that all activities associated with their sport programme occur in a secure environment, or a physical and emotional safe space. These safe spaces must be free from emotional and physical threat.

*Facilities*

The organization is committed to creating and maintaining separate sport facilities for boys and girls or, if shared, are committed to ensuring that female participants have toilets or changing rooms available and reserved exclusively for them before, during and after their activity and sports fields that provide restricted access so unwanted visitors, strangers and boys/men unrelated to the programme cannot watch.

*Coaches, facilitators and support staff*

The organization is committed to employing and training female coaches as well and properly training male coaches on gender sensitive issues to ensure an atmosphere of safety and empowerment. In addition, the organization is committed to hiring and training appropriate support staff such as female referees, medical doctors/team trainers and managers. It is important to have female coaches leading activities and sessions in all girls programmes. If not possible, there must be at least one female coach/facilitator always present if a male coach is leading a programme activity or session with a group of all girls or mixed gender.

**Mentors in Sport Programme**

**1. Female role models**

The organization must seek out and engage with positive female role models in the community as well as create an organizational culture that supports and fosters female role models internally.

**2. Leadership**

The organization must strive to create a climate and structure in which female participants have the opportunity to take leadership roles at various levels within the organization, such as peer leadership opportunities, assistant coaching/facilitation opportunities and a path to employment as a coach or facilitator.

1. “High-quality sport activities” defined as fun, challenging, safe, inclusive, regularly occurring, intentionally-designed for specific groups of participants, continuously monitored and improved. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Gender Equality Toolkit,” Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Policy Development and Studies Branch, UN April 2005 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. USAID’s Gender Equality Policy [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. USAID’s Gender Equality Policy [↑](#footnote-ref-4)