



Global-local Empowerment Policies and their Impact on Women in sports in Kenya

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Background

- Following the women's push for liberation and equal rights movements , various national and international laws have been passed over the last 50years – from UNHR of 1948- to the 2000 MDGs – whose aim is to empower women.
- Specific to sport is the Brighton Declaration of 1994
- As one of the renowned nations in sports, Kenya remains a dominant power in long distance running.
- The last decade has witnessed an increase in women's participation in sport and in production of exemplary performances, both locally and internationally.
- Kenyan women are a dominant force in the world marathons.
- There is an increased access and involvement of women in sports through clubs, schools, as well as the in nonprofit organizations such as Sadili Oval club, Mathare Youth Sports Association, Tecla Lourupe Peace Foundation, and Lornah Kiplagat Foundation.
- International laws and legislations passed have, to a larger extent, been critical to the changing patterns of women's engagement in sport.
- Although a number of studies have reviewed the impact of these policies (*From Windboek to Montreal: Women and sport progress report 1998-2002; Women, leadership and the Olympic movement-2004*) none have been specific to Kenya.
- What has been the impact of these international legislations on women sport in Kenya?

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of international policies on women sports in Kenya.

Methods

Participants : Purposively selected five women in various sport organizations (Patton, 2002).

Procedures: Interviews and use of participant profile forms

Location: Nairobi. **Data Analysis:** Used constant comparison (Le Compte, 2000) and thematic analysis (Roulston, 2001).

Results

Table 1. Representation of women leaders in sport organizations in Kenya

Name of Sport organization	Total of number of management	Number of men	Percent	Number of women	Percent	Roles of women
National Olympic Committee of Kenya (NOCK)	10	8	80%	2	20%	-Treasure (1) - Members (2)
Athletics Kenya (AK)	21	19	90%	1	10%	Women's Representative (1)
Kenya Secondary Schools Sports Association(KSSSA)	12	10	83%	2	17%	-Assistant treasurer (1) - Member (1)
Nairobi Secondary Schools Sports Association (NSSSA)	14	8	57%	6	43%	-Treasurer (1) -Assistant Secretary(1) -members (4)
Kenya Hockey Union (KHU)	16	13	81%	3	19%	-Vice Chair (1) -Secretary General (1) - Fixtures secretary(1)
Kenya Volleyball Federation (KVF)	15	14	93%	1	7%	-Member
Kenya Basketball Federation(KBF)	15	14	93%	1	7%	-Member
Kenya Rugby Union (KRU)	20	16	80%	4	20%	-Women's Rugby (1) -Minor & women's Rugby(2)

Results

- Kenya is a signatory to the international legislations on equal rights.
- Nairobi women's meeting in 1985 was a landmark to women's empowerment in Kenya.
- The affirmative action policy has been adapted and included in the recent 2010 promulgated Kenya's new constitution.
- In the Government constitution advocates for the provision of equal opportunity, including access to sports and recreational activities, both in formal and informal sectors.
- In the sporting arena, Kenyan women sports leaders are actively involved in international women's empowerment meetings.
- However, women hold different perspectives on impact of the Brighton declaration, which was adopted by the Association of Kenyan Women in Sport (TAKWIS) in 2005. For some, it has had positive impact, while for others they were not aware of its existence.

Nevertheless, some of the most successful girls' and women's empowerment programs are those by non-profit organizations such as **Sadili Oval's** model **"Girl Power "**program, whose mission is: **Providing girls with Education, Leadership and Entrepreneurship in life through sports**



- The program targets majority of girls from underserved communities in Kenya.
- Over 400 girls participate in the annual *Girl Power* program.
- The program utilizes youthful role models to impact the girls.
- For instance, Intercooler is a 23 year old Basketball coach at the Sadili Oval club and is also one of the **program leaders. As a former basketball player**, she admits to having taken advantage of the chance to play on the college team, and **advises** girls on knowing their goals in life and to bridge sports and academics:

I got a scholarship there, so I started with the one in Multimedia University , KCCTI used to be colleges and universities leagues only, so as I used to play there , so as I was finishing I got a scholarship there and I asked what are you guys offering me, I want to get educated because I was thinking you can play yes, but you can't play forever, you might get an injury where will you go from there, you should have a plan B and my plan B was give me a scholarship, give me an education, so they used to give me" (IC).

Challenges

- The government Minister is yet to ratify the Brighton document.
- A number of women leaders in sport indicated that they were not aware of the Brighton declaration.

Unsafe working environment for girls and women in sport:
The third one that we are facing which is the hardest to deal with....working especially with girls such that I would take a girls' team somewhere and you don't have proper toilets,.....girls don't feel safe ... there are too many men managing women's teams and it works in some countries, but it's not working here because we've got.....incidences where (women) are abused, I have been threatened, not to be seen walking in certain places,...I would be killed....It's bad... you have to find...protection for them sowhich is a very difficult environment. I walk with bodyguards (LO).

Discussion

- There is a slight increase in participation of women in sport as well as in decision making process, but not impactful.
- Intervention by world bodies has helped more women to engage in leadership roles in sports, as noted by one of the participant:
"Reason they wanted the men to be there at that particular time till...the ... the body.....the World Hockey body said now we only want, and am talking about Kenya, we only want lady umpire, if you want a man this time you are going to pay for this ticket. That is how women started entering slowly" (JL)

Conclusion

- TAKWIS needs to be more proactive in providing education and information on empowerment policies to communities, through effective outreach programs.
- There should be more support for non-profit organizations and community groups that use sport to empower girls and women.
- The government has to play a leading role in supporting women in sport, as one participant noted:

The Minister has a lot to do, Affirmative Action for women in sports...the direction they take(The ministry) is the direction the Federations will take if...they show us they have no time for women... federations...will have no time for us. And Affirmative must be geared up by us who are in Federations....but through the Ministry (MC).

- The 30% Affirmative Action rule, although not directly making reference to women in sports, is viewed as the catalyst to the implementation of the sports policy and subsequent increase in opportunities for women in sports.
- Increasing participation of women and girls in sports at the grassroots is the most definite way of ensuring a stronger and constant leadership feeder program.
- Increased leadership roles for women are likely to enhance girls' and women's participation in sports.

Selected References

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