

# GENDER EQUALITY AND THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT



Using sport as a tool for social development has been at the core of the IOC's mission since it was founded more than a century ago.

The Olympic Games have played a key role in breaking down gender barriers for more than a century, with women first competing at the Games in Paris in 1900 – before women had even been granted the right to vote in most countries around the world.

While female athletes had to defy discrimination and social pressure to compete in Paris – with only 22 women competing out of a total of 997 athletes – female participation at the Games has increased steadily since then, with women accounting for a record 44% of the participants at the 2012 Games in London. The Olympic Agenda 2020 has set a goal of reaching complete equality (50%).

But the Olympic Movement's commitment to gender equality extends well beyond its efforts to increase women's participation in the Olympic Games, with the Olympic Charter stating that one of the roles of the IOC is "to encourage and support the

promotion of women in sport at all levels with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women".

The IOC women and sport policy strives to:

- Reach 50% of women at Olympic Games
- Increase women in leadership positions as well as in other technical posts such as coaching
- Provide a range of opportunities to promote women and girls' access to sport and physical education
- Protect women and girls in sport
- Encourage and develop women and girls' self-esteem
- Encourage equal media coverage.

"THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT'S COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY EXTENDS WELL BEYOND ITS EFFORTS TO INCREASE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES"



## The IOC women and sport programmes



### Advocacy:

- Advocate for increased participation of women athletes in the Olympic Movement and in leadership positions in the Olympic Movement.
- Promote greater access to sport for girls and women.

### Raising awareness:

- Recognise achievements of individuals and organisations promoting women in and through sport through women and sport awards.
- Raise awareness on Harassment and Abuse in Sport.
- Organise IOC World Conferences on Women and Sport.
- Organise Continental and Regional Seminars.

### Capacity building:

- Encourage women to take leadership positions in the Olympic Movement.
- Provide Women occupying mid and senior positions in National Olympic Committees and National Federations with self-empowerment, leadership and personal efficiency skills.
- Organise mentoring and coaching sessions to motivate and support women to stand for elections.
- Provide women in Sport opportunities to connect and exchange best practices.
- Provide coaching and athletic scholarships as well as degree programmes to bring more women into the top ranks of sport.
- Harness the leadership potential of elite female athletes and help them to prepare their transitions from the field of competition to post-competition success.
- Organise media workshops to raise awareness of the importance of the media in achieving gender equality.

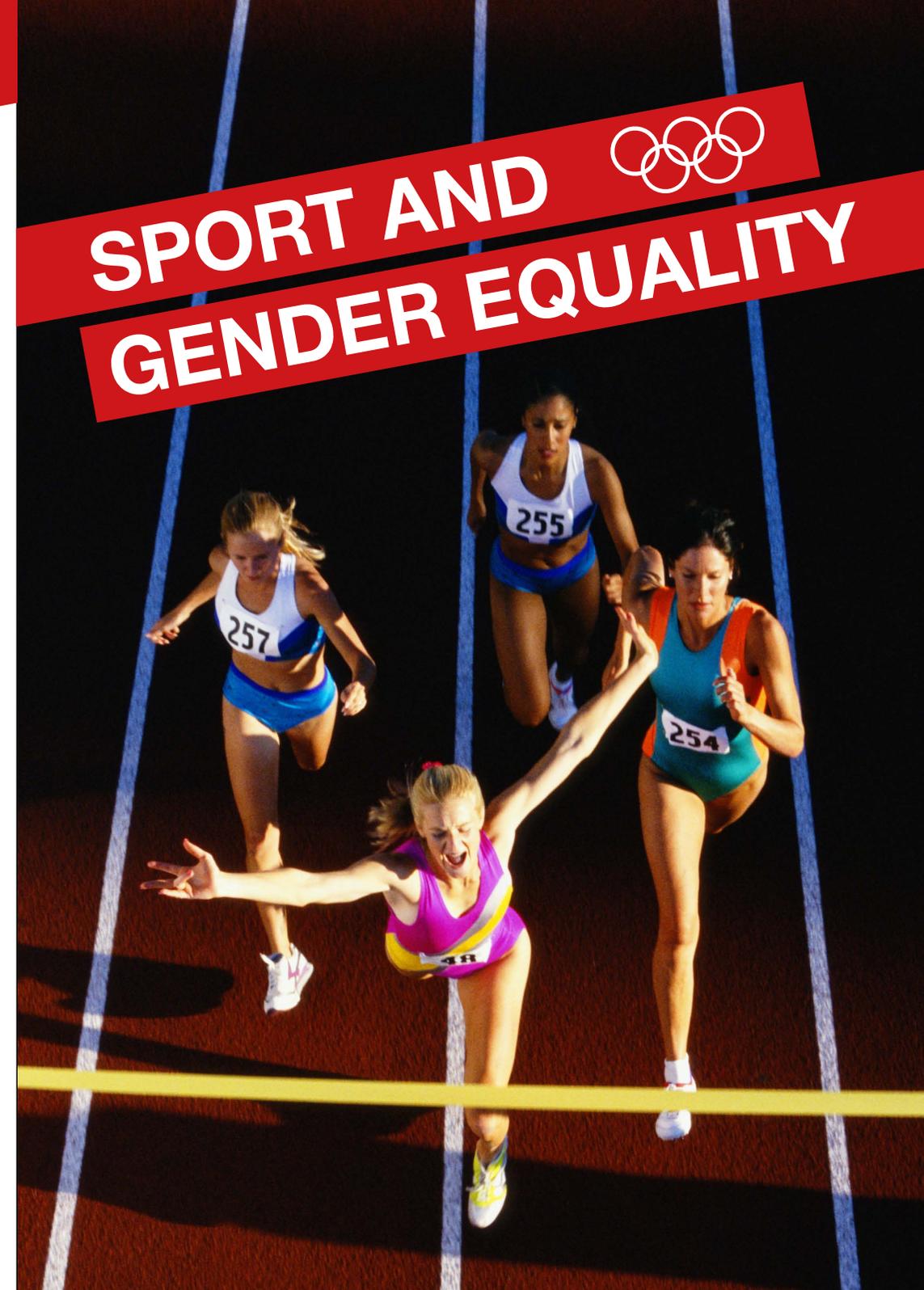
### Field projects:

- Provide direct technical or financial support to local projects benefiting girls and women.

[www.olympic.org](http://www.olympic.org)

"THE OLYMPIC GAMES HAVE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN BREAKING DOWN GENDER BARRIERS FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY"

# SPORT AND GENDER EQUALITY



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“The Olympic Games give a glimpse of how a society based on non-discrimination could be. All Olympic sports are open to men and women and competition takes place in the central belief, written in our charter, that sport should be available to all regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or any other form of discrimination, including sexual orientation.

We will continue to work towards full gender equality. It was one of the key recommendations of Olympic Agenda 2020, our strategic roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement, which was unanimously adopted at the 127th IOC Session in Monaco, in December.”

**THOMAS BACH**  
IOC PRESIDENT



“Sport is an education; it is an excellent tool for human development. The values you get from sport take you to any area of your life with chances to reach your success. These values can come from practising sport at any level. It could be leisure or development.”

**ADRIANA BEHAR**  
TWO-TIME OLYMPIC SILVER MEDALLIST (BRAZIL, BEACH VOLLEYBALL)



“Access to sport is a fundamental social right and an important factor of social integration and development, an instrument for promoting universal values and a solid education for our children and youth.”

**H.E. MR. MOHAMED KHALED KHIARI**  
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TUNISIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS



“Sport increases self-esteem, boosts confidence, and can be an effective platform to provide women and girls with leadership skills. The potential for sport to contribute to the empowerment of women and girls is huge.”

**PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UN WOMEN

From the joyous smile of a child who has just scored their first goal at football training, to the billions of people around the world who are enthralled by each edition of the Olympic Games, the far-reaching power of sport is undeniable.

Indeed, as the late Nelson Mandela said: “Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does.”

For more than a century, the simple pleasures of sport have been helping to break down barriers throughout the world – perhaps nowhere more significantly than in the fight for gender equality.

Ever since they first competed at the Olympic Games in 1900, female athletes have been serving as powerful role models for young girls around the world by challenging gender stereotypes and proving that girls can overcome societal expectations and achieve their dreams.

Sport’s unique role in promoting gender equality was highlighted in 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action recognised sport as a tool to develop non-discriminatory education and training; strengthen programmes that promote women’s health; and eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training.

Now, 20 years on, as the fight for gender equality continues, it has never been more important to highlight the integral role that sport can play in the empowerment of women and girls around the world.

In addition to challenging gender stereotypes, women’s sport helps nurture acceptance by bringing people together, breaking down cultural barriers and promoting greater tolerance and understanding.

Sport can also help build confidence, encourage self-discipline, provide a sense

of accomplishment and develop decision-making skills and other important character traits such as management and negotiation that can empower women to become leaders in the workplace and other areas of life. Indeed, research shows a direct correlation between girls’ participation in sport and greater achievement in higher education and employment.

The potential health benefits of women’s participation in sport are also well documented, with regular physical activity helping to improve quality of life and prevent a variety of non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, chronic respiratory disease, and diabetes.

The International Society of Sport Psychology also indicates that sport can contribute to women’s mental health by reducing anxiety; decreasing mild to moderate depression; reducing neuroses and anxiety; reducing various types of stress; and producing a beneficial emotional effect.

In addition, sport can provide a highly effective platform for education programmes that target major societal issues, such as gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls.

With so much to be gained from promoting girls and women’s involvement in sport, now is the time to emphasise the vital role that sport can play in gender equality and women’s empowerment and, at a broader level, societal change around the world.

