

# **Gender, sport and development cooperation, findings from a quick scan (Utrecht University & NCDO, 2002)**

## **Summary, conclusions and recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

*What are the similarities and differences between organisations working in sport and development respectively, when examining their visions, experiences and projects on gender, sport and development?*

Both sport and development organisations view sport as a (potentially) effective means to improve the position of women. Development organisations have a great deal of knowledge and experience regarding gender but they pay remarkably little attention to sport in their development projects. They explain this by saying that their work is demand-driven and there is little demand for sport-related work from the field. Sports organisations, on the other hand, do pay attention to sport and development cooperation but have relatively little time for gender within those activities.

Development organisations have a two-track policy towards gender equality. They develop or support activities that target women as a group and they work towards changing concepts and structures. In other words, they pay attention to empowering women and mainstreaming at the same time. Policies employed by sports organisations focus on women as a target group and hardly work towards directing policies and public image. In other word, the focus is predominantly on women empowerment.

At the level of intervention, development organisations mainly work structurally. They also work on symbols but in a slightly less tangible way. The adopted gender approach is primarily geared towards modifying policy, organisation and culture. All projects are judged and - should the need arise - altered to fit gender principles; cooperation with counterparts is carried out on the basis of gender criteria; action plans, objectives and desired outcomes are determined with the counterpart. Furthermore, development organisations attempt to change the existing ideas about gender in a given society by organising debates, congresses and campaigns. But they pay little attention at the level of identity.

Sports organisations are mainly aimed at the level of identity, much less at the symbolic and structural level. The participation of women and girls is often the best objective. Sports organisations hardly pay any attention to the structural level, bar a few attempts at measures to change structures and concepts. One can think of media exposure, another instance could be the composition of a board, where two vacant seats must be filled by women, but generally speaking, these are mainly ad hoc actions. Furthermore, the conclusion is that sports organisations are often present in the field in a way that is not gender conscious. There are frequent male-only delegations that leave the Netherlands to go on brief field missions.

Sports and development organisations indicate that their activities are predominantly and more easily directed towards girls because reaching women is difficult. However, little is done to change the attitudes of and power balance between men and women and to look for traditional sports and other kinetic forms that fit a culture. Both sport and development organisations pay scant attention to the symbolic level.

*What are the aspirations that exist in terms of cooperation between these two types of organisations?*

Both sport and development organisations have indicated that they have no desire to cooperate at project (management) level. At best, they would like to make use of each other's expertise when dealing with certain aspects of a given project. At present, none of this expertise is used anywhere, neither in relation to a project nor in terms of a general exchange of knowledge. The desirability of such an exchange is obvious, in view of the knowledge and expertise gaps that exist in both types of organisation. There is a need to exchange knowledge and experience at the level of concrete projects.

We have listed the conclusions below, point by point:

- Development organisations hardly pay any attention to sport within women projects.
- Sports organisations pay relatively little attention to gender within their sport development projects.
- Within existing sport development projects insufficient notion is taken of gender issues. The predominant focus is on women empowerment and not on gender equality.
- Sports organisations in the field are often not gender conscious.
- Sports and development organisations make insufficient use of the local media to influence the public image and signification of women.
- Sports and development organisations do very little to modify the attitudes of men and change power relations.
- Sports organisations almost exclusively use Western sports and do not exert themselves in the search for types and forms of sport that fit a culture.
- Within the existing sport development projects, there is hardly any focus on all three levels at which gender is shaped in a given society. Sport organisations mainly focus on the identity level and development organisations mainly focus on structurally embedding the gender approach in their projects. Both devote little attention to the symbolic level within their sport and gender projects.
- There is no desire to cooperate at the level of project (management), at best there exists the wish to use each other's expertise when dealing with certain aspects of a given project.
- It is desirable that sports and development organisations exchange expertise, given the existing knowledge and expertise gaps within these organisations in the areas of either sport or gender.

### **Recommendations**

Given the analyses and conclusions, there are a number of recommendations for organisations and projects that are working in the field of sport and development cooperation. These recommendations are listed below. Achieving gender equality is only deemed feasible when sports and development organisations carry out a policy that follows two tracks: women empowerment and mainstreaming.

Therefore, special activities for women must be either organised or supported. This is the first track. But furthermore, the structures of the sport projects must be modified in such a way that the gender principles shall be integrated in each and every aspect of the organisation and the project.

Organisations that aim for gender equality can intervene at various levels. Therefore, the recommendations connect to the various levels of intervention, i.e. the identity level, the structural level and the symbolic level. Finally, recommendations are made concerning the cooperation between sport and development organisations.

***In terms of identity:***

- Acquaint staff and management of your own organisation with gender equality issues and information by means of meetings and reports
- Acquaint staff and management of your counterpart organisation with gender equality issues
- Discuss gender experiences with other organisations.

***In terms of structure:***

- Develop a gender policy, gender programs and gender activities that will improve the methodology and attitude of a given organisation. Involve women's organisations or other women's networks when this policy is being developed
- Create a gender portfolio and appoint a gender sensitive member of the board or commission as holder of said portfolio
- Develop systems and mechanisms that take note of the opinions of the members of staff and management concerning gender equality. For instance, make gender a recurring item on the agenda
- Promote the recruitment of female members of staff at all levels within the organisations, both your own and your counterpart
- Monitor gender data (archive, database, reports)
- Create or improve the conditions for the participation of women in activities (in terms of time, place, expenditure, professional development, equal options)
- Develop an action plan in collaboration with the women's networks with specific but realistic objectives that are locally "fitting".

***In terms of the symbolic level:***

- Create awareness for programs for women and girls. When sports activities are covered, ask special media attention for women in general or particular female examples or role-models
- Create awareness in terms of the special needs women and girls have in sport and also in terms of the type of masculinity that may be affirmed in sport
- Make use of gender sensitive language and imagery, featuring men and women
- Support promotional activities, including campaigns, debates and conferences that positively modify the concepts of female sport participants, board members and trainers
- Involve (exemplary) women as course leaders, referees, board members, participants in debates and congresses
- Devise systems of recognition, for instance sports woman of the year or something similar.

***In terms of cooperation:***

- Sports organisations that are involved in sport and development projects should receive extra gender training and hire gender experts when conducting their activities and executing their projects. To this end, they could make use of gender experts from development organisations. Projects should be assessed according to gender criteria and adjusted if and when the need arises.
- Development organisations willing to use sport in their development projects should make use of sports experts in the field, who could be conducting missions of varying duration. Development organisations are advised to establish and maintain contacts with training institutes, such as ALO (Academy for Sports and Physical Education) and CIOS (College for Sports and Physical Education).