



International Women's Day Breakfast Roundtable: Women in Sport
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Calling out Harassment in Sport: Steps for Change

Dr Lombé Mwambwa, Research Director- Global Observatory for Gender Equality & Sport

Thank you so much, thank you for that introduction and thank you to everyone for being here, all those joining us online as well, we're grateful for your commitment to engage on this difficult yet really important topic.

The work that we do at the global observatory for gender equality and sport contributes to the sports sector and various movements that are organizing to address challenges around gender equality within the sports space. Our approach involves **three strategic actions**;

- the first one is around what we call **enquiry** which is encompassing research and data and facilitating a knowledge pool on topics related to gender equality in the context of sport.
- the second action we take is around **engagement**, so we convene, we mobilize different stakeholders to come together to have meaningful dialogue on sometimes really challenging topics or topics where there isn't even any consensus at all but that affect gender equality.
- the third area of our strategic actions is contributing to **enabling** actors across the sports space to take action. This is policy makers, governments, also international organizations and entities in sports such as federations and related actors to help them enhance their capacity to do what they ought to be doing.

So, the steps that we think can be taken, that I'd like to share with you would fit within these three approaches.

Enquire

So, the first step that we see as really important in calling out harassment is for the sector and all the different stakeholders to go beyond numbers when it comes to research and enquiry and data and knowledge. Figuring out what we are trying to understand related to gender-based violence and what gets in the way of reporting or of speaking out against harassment. So, that

means looking further than what is prevalence of incidences, going beyond who is reporting and not reporting whether it's men or women who are reporting but looking also into the questions around :

- what approaches are there for calling out harassment apart from filling out forms or apart from perhaps going to report to your superior?
- how does it look in other contexts? What does calling out harassment look like?

So, looking at how some approaches can be localized but achieve the same thing. We need to gather those learnings; we need to gather those ideas.

The second thing we need to do is to look at a larger scale and to track the changes that are happening even in who is calling out harassment. Some things we might see for example are perhaps institutionalization or establishment of organizations and bodies to speak on behalf of people. So sometimes when individuals or athletes or people who are less heard call out harassment then they are not listened to because they are expected to be behind a more influential body, so we need to keep track of all of these things.

We also need to consider who it is acceptable to hear from and who it is acceptable to hear about, for example :

- if athletes who are women in rural areas call out harassment, are we interested in that information?
- are we collecting that data? Are we collecting data about women who are non-binary within sport when they are harassed?
- are we collecting that data or are we only interested in particular groups?

So we need the inquiry and research efforts to also look into those things.

We know the theme around women's day today, our colleagues also at CSW in New York, in various countries, in Southern Africa, there also thinking around technology and the digital space and how it can contribute. So we should also see how we can leverage that to get a global picture of what is going on around addressing harassment and abuse. We should keep track of what policy shifts are happening not just in the sports space but in other spaces as well whether it's in the labor movement and around protection of rights more broadly.

Engage

When it comes to engagement, we have another opportunity for a step there, to convene more broadly the types of actors who can come together to take action. So that we are not just talking amongst ourselves, the sports sector or with the people who are already specialized in gender-based violence and around protection of women. We need to bring in for example, like mentioned earlier people working in the labor movement because we have to think about descent work in sport as well as responsibilities of workers within sport to keep a safe environment and to consider them as people who can potentially harm others. We also consider that they can be harmed and so to think of this in a slightly different way and cooperate from that perspective.

We need to facilitate those conversations. Another group we need to consider is witnesses. Who are the people who witness harm happening, since they are affected, what opportunities are there for engagement. So, it's people who are the subjects of the harassment, the people who cause harm, and those who are the duty bearers but also the people who witness harm who are often left out. They are important, as we know, to whether in future we will get more people calling out harassment. Whether that culture of calling out harassment is going to progress or if we are now going to get more silence as they will see what unfortunately happens when harassment is called out. Does it result in punitive measures for the people calling it out or is there actually action to protect those who are harmed and to hold accountable those who cause harm ? So, we should really consider that.

Enable

A third step that would contribute to change is about education. So we see a lot of education focused on the safeguarding offices, education for perhaps the legal people or those working in ethics departments but we also need to look at education for everybody in the institutions; the medics, the clerks, the administrators handling data, the people who are handling uniforms and the people who are cleaning, the whole sector, the whole entity when it comes to sport has to be seen as responsible and we need interventions in those spaces.

We also need to facilitate a sort of multidirectional communication and interaction on this topic, not only speaking within sports bodies but with the members of the sports bodies and the leaders, we also need that engagement of the sports bodies and government entities and bodies. Ultimately when we look at the responsibilities of governments, they have the duty of protecting their people and making sure their rights are fulfilled. So, they should also hold accountable sports organizations and actors in the sports space but also governments must be accountable to each other for what actions they are taking. Which I think, is a mechanism that the Council of Europe already is aligned with. So, one key sentiment that we're committed to in sport and we hear over and over again is around the autonomy of sport, yes we can have autonomy but that does not exempt the sports actors from responsibility and accountability.

So, we need everybody to have a shared responsibility and commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment in sport. We think that would be the major change that would happen in the end. Thank you.