

# Female representation in National Sport Associations' Executive Boards. The Case of Zimbabwe.

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October 2015

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## 1.1 Introduction

The last decade has seen numerous declarations and policies being developed to address the issue of women's representation in sport governance. The Brighton Declaration provided a set of principles in relation to gender equality in sport. One of the principles involves leadership in sport stating that the number of women in decision-making positions in sport organizations should increase (International Working Group on Women and Sport, 2012). The Olympic Charter states that one of the roles of the IOC is "to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures, with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women" (Rule 2, paragraph 7). The IOC also recognizes that gender equality is a critical component of effective sports administration and continues to support the promotion of women and girls in sport at all levels and structures.

The government of Zimbabwe crafted and adopted a National Gender Policy in 2013. One of the objectives of the National Gender Policy is promotion of equal advancement of women and men in all sectors of the Zimbabwean economy and this includes the sport sector. The constitution of Zimbabwe 2013 in article 17 (b i) states that "The state shall must promote the full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwean society on the basis equality , women constitute at least half the membership of all commissions and other elective and appointed governmental bodies established by or under this constitution or any Act of Parliament ".

National Sport Associations (NSA) are elective boards formed and registered under the Sport and Recreation Act(1995) that play a key role in the delivery of sport disciplines in Zimbabwe. Critical issues impacting women's representation in NSA boards and sport in Zimbabwe have never been formally and systematically explored. Therefore, a survey was conducted on the gender composition of executive boards of all National Sport Associations (NSAs) registered under the Sport and Recreation Commission. The focus of the study was to understand current gender composition in NSA boards, establish baseline for women in boards, and provide insights to the barriers affecting women in assuming positions in boards NSA. The study also explored the strategies presently employed by Sport and Recreation Commission to encourage and increase representation of women in NSAs boards. It also examined the current constitutional position of NSAs with regard to gender representation in boards. The study further interrogated the current sport legislation and policies in relation to the promotion of gender equality and equity within the sport sector.

## 1.2 Aims of study

- To understand current gender composition in NSA boards
- To establish baseline for women representation in NSA boards
- To provide insights to the barriers affecting women in assuming positions in boards NSA
- To explore the strategies presently employed by Sport and Recreation Commission to encourage and increase representation of women in NSAs boards.
- To examine the current constitutional position of NSA with regard to gender representation in boards.
- To interrogate the current sport legislation and policies in relation to the promotion of gender equality and equity within the sport sector.

## 1.3 Methodology:

It is mandatory for NSAs to submit statutory returns that provide demographic profile of its board to the SRC; data was therefore extracted from the board profiles. Currently there are 43 NSAs registered under the Sports and Recreation Commission. In this study all the 43 registered NSAs Boards and executive committees were surveyed specifically analyzing data on board members, positions and composition of executive committee members. In analyzing the board profiles the following issues were examined:

- Composition of women in the executive board
- The number of women in key positions vs the number of men in key positions
- The ratio of women to men positions
- Percentage of women in NSA boards
- Percentage of women occupying key positions in Boards and Executive Committees

Constitutions of the 43 NSAs were also analyzed to ascertain policy position of the NSAs regarding gender equality and equity within their boards and general operations:

- The constitutional position of NSAs on gender equality and equity issues
- The election processes and procedure in relation to gender

Furthermore an analysis of sport legislation in Zimbabwe on gender issues was also conducted

- Sport policies position on gender equity and equality issues particularly representation in leadership and board positions

Analysis was also done on the current initiatives by the SRC to increase representation of women

#### **1.4 Major Observations, Results and Discussion**

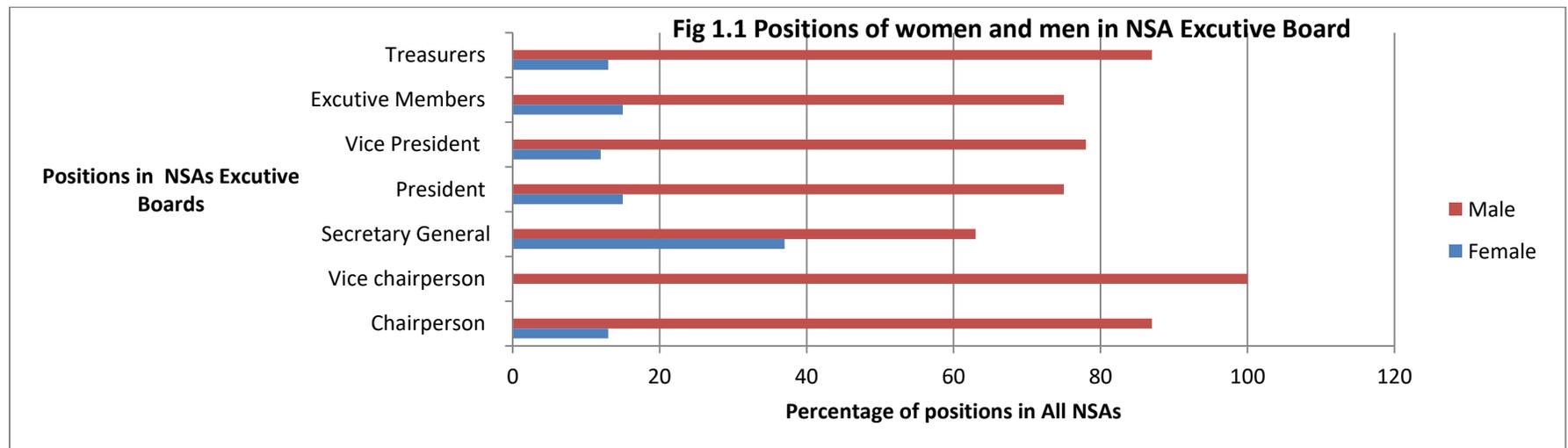
##### **1.5 Current strategies to increase representation of women in NSAs**

The SRC has developed and implemented several strategies to increase the representation of women in leadership positions which include:

- Facilitated for formation of the Women in Sport Foundation that is an advocacy arm for women in sport. It was noted that the foundation is still at its formative stages and operating with an interim committee. Therefore the Women in Sport Foundation is yet to become the voice that speaks on behalf of women as it is still centralized in Harare and is yet to launch developmental programmes to empower women in sport. The foundation also faces challenges of funding due to an adverse economic environment.
- Currently the SRC is running the Women Sport Leader Course aimed at equipping women to become effective sport leaders. Provide access and opportunity to education advancement and leadership for women through sport management, sport administration, community sport leader. However due to limited funding Women in Sport Leader course has not been conducted frequently to develop skills and knowledge of women in the sport sector
- The SRC also uses quarterly meetings with NSA as a platform for educating NSAs on gender issues.
- Recruitment of female volunteers for the Zimbabwe National Youth Games, Zimbabwe Paralympic Games, Youth Education Through Sport and Youth Sport Exchange Programme as way to develop the skills and capacities of women to become leaders in sports.

## 1.6 Results and Discussion

Gender	Chairman	Vice Chairman	Secretary general	President	Vice President	Executive Members	Treasurers	Total in Executive Boards
Male	7	3	27	34	29	11	20	136
Female	1	0	16	6	4	2	3	36

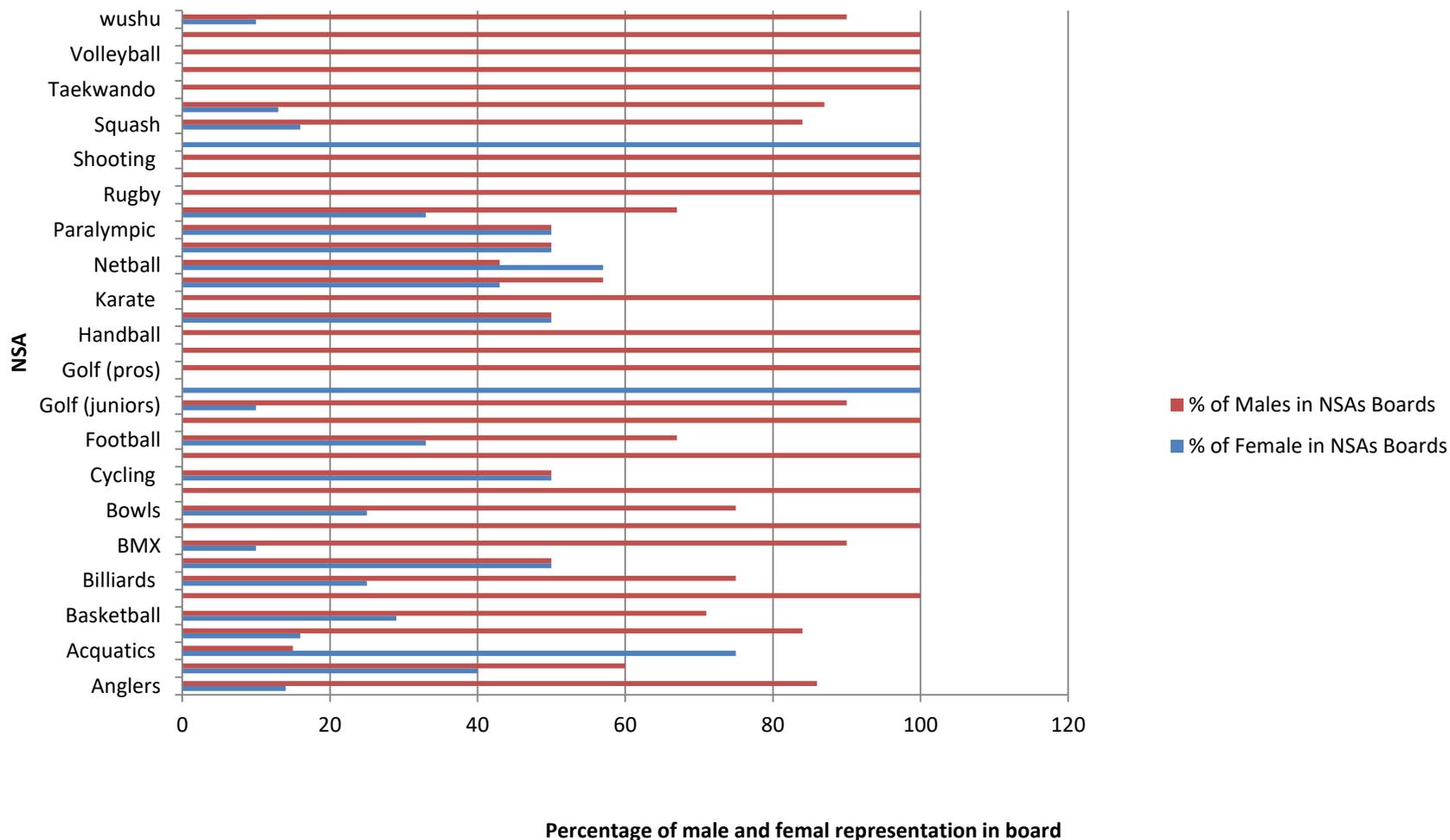


## 1.7 NSAs Board Profile Results

Out of 43 NSAs, 32 (63%) do not have a women on their boards, whilst NSAs 16(37%) have 36 women on their boards, and only 6 NSAs have a female president (12%). Analysis of the various position held by females and males in NSAs boards showed that there is only one female board chairperson 1 % and 99% of board chairpersons are males. NSAs have 2(4%) female vice chairperson and 41 chairperson which is 96%. They are 3(6%) female presidents in NSAs executive boards and 40 (94%)

president among NSAs, whereas the percentage of women on NSAs was 21% and only 16 had a female secretary generals. Only 3 women out of 43 NSAs are treasurers and 18% of women in are executive members in the board. This indicates underrepresentation of women in NSAs and decision making positions and dominance of man in key man in sport leadership positions.

**Figure 1.1 Women Representation in NSAs Executive Boards**



## **1.7 NSAs Boards Composition Results**

Out of the 43 Boards that were analyzed 6 NSAs, namely Aquatics, Cycling, Hockey, Paralympics, Special Olympics and Olympics which is 11% have more than 50% representation of women in the boards. It is notably that of these 6 NSAs 50% are directly connected to the International Olympic Committee which strongly advocates for gender equality within boards according to its charter. The graph shows that 89% of the NSAs have less than 50% representation of women in the boards. The highly level of underrepresentation of women in NSAs is further indicated by the fact that 15 NSAs do not have women representation within their boards whilst only one NSA does not have a male representative within its Board. This clearly shows that women are underrepresented in NSAs and males dominant in decision making boards of the NSAs.

Research has shown that that gender diversity on Boards leads to better corporate performance. The survey shows that the overall percentage of women in NSAs Boards in 15%. This implies that NSAs are yet to harness the different benefits of having gender diverse and balanced boards. The Olympic Charter and International Federations constitutions have set a target of a minimum of 40 per cent of Boards being female by 2015. Currently the sport sector does not have a clear position on the representation of women in NSAs boards and this may continue to maintain the existing status core of underrepresentation of women.

## **1.8 Policy and constitutions analysis and observations**

The constitutions analyzed to ascertain gender equality and equity issues it was noted that only 6% (3) NSAs clearly stipulates issues of gender composition with the NSAs boards in spite of respective international federations constitutions clearly indicating the issue of gender composition and representation in NSAs boards. Although the Constitution of Zimbabwe clearly stipulates the issue of gender balance and the full participation of women in all spheres of society in [including sport], and states that both genders are equally represented in all institutions and agencies of government at every level. It was noted that the existing sport legislation (SRC Act, Statutory Instrument 421 and Physical Education Policy), does not specific policy direction on the composition and representation of women in NSA.

### **Poor alignment of NSAs constitution to International Federations policies on gender**

Although International Federations and the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees have clearly outlined policies and procedures in relation to gender equality and equity within their structures and leadership systems. The 43 constitutions analyzed showed poor alignment to the international federations policies on Gender Equality and Equity Issues. Only 3 NSAs which include Zimbabwe Football Association, Zimbabwe Women Golf and the Zimbabwe Olympic Committee complied with the International Federations policies and procedures in relation to gender issues.

### **Lack of gender policy in sport**

Sport policies on gender provide a framework and lay a foundation for gender equity and equality in the sport sector. Analysis on existing Zimbabwe sport legislations that is the SRC Act, Statutory Instrument 204 and Physical Education Policy showed that there was no clear policy directive on issues of ensuring gender representation of women in NSAs. The absence of sport policies that address issue of gender imbalance and representation of women in strategic positions in NSA structure has resulted in further the underrepresentation of women NSA boards

### **Limited involvement of women in crafting and development of constitutions**

The absence of gender equality and equity issues in the 93% of NSAs constitutions suggests that, the process of crafting of most constitutions was done by men and lacked the perspective of women and girls. This approach to development of constitutions results in male dominated executive boards that promote a male culture within NSAs.

### **Women unfriendly structures and environments within NSAs**

Most of the NSAs are voluntary organizations and demand substantial investment of time and energy plus a balance of family and work life. Generally, the Zimbabwean society places a higher demand of family responsibilities to women. The voluntary nature and structures of NSAs are inflexible and insensitive to the family demands and responsibilities of women.

### **constitutions, Procedural Rules and National/General Assemblies:**

Given that most if not all NSAs are affiliates of IOC and International Federations whose charters and constitutions clearly articulate and encourage the practice of gender equality and equity it was anticipated that these NSAs were likely to have gender policies, constitutional clauses of gender and adhere to gender balanced practices . It was however noted that few 3 NSAs had adopted specific formal measures to address the issue of gender equity in terms of election to their board or

executive committee. The three NSAs which had adopted a proactive approach to requiring change via constitutional were the Zimbabwe Olympic Committee, Zimbabwe Women Golf Association and Zimbabwe Football Association.

The absence of board composition rules in NSA militates against females being nominated who will tend to be the few and candidates are predominantly male, leaving a smaller pool from which to select women. Although women's sport policy resolutions of the International Olympic Committee state that there should be a minimum of 40% representation of women in sport boards, most of women are still underrepresented in most disciplines in Olympic Sport codes in NSAs in Zimbabwe.

### **Gender insensitive election process**

The current process of selection, election and appointment of NSAs executive boards is a barrier to the election and appointment process of women in executive boards. In all the 42 NSAs, the number of women in boards is less than 20%. The election and appointment process which is drawn from constitutions that are male crafted creates favorable conditions to the election of men than females. Most of the election procedures and selection of candidates are not communicated clearly particularly on ensuring gender balance. The current composition of women in NSAs shows that women are extremely outnumbered by men in the electorate, as well as being significantly outnumbered as candidates in Boards; this creates an intimidating and uncomfortable environment for women thereby discouraging the participation of women in NSAs boards.

### **Limited advocacy structures for women in NSAs**

Women in sport advocacy structures and organizations are vital in the promoting and voicing the concerns of women in sport. Only 1 NSA has formed a Women in Sport Commissions and 42 do not have a women advocacy channel in their structures. The lack of advocacy structures within NSAs clearly distinguishes ZOC from other NSAs in relation to gender representation.

### **Lack of research information**

In conducting the analysis it was observed that there was generally lack of researched information on women in sport leadership positions in Zimbabwe. There was no baseline study conducted previously to establish and measure the level of representation of women.

### **Non adherence to provisions of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and Gender Policy guidelines**

The Constitution of Zimbabwe and the Gender Policy clearly stipulates the issue of gender balance and the full participation of women in all spheres of society in [including sport], and states that both genders are equally represented in all institutions and agencies of government at every level. It further specifies women should constitute at least half the membership of all Commissions and other elective and appointed governmental bodies established by or under the Constitution or any Act of Parliament. Regardless of the above fundamental principles of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, female representation in NSAs is low. These relatively low participation figures could be attributed to the strong influence of patriarchal practices and customs in the Zimbabwean society.

## **1.9 Recommendations**

In order to create more gender diverse boards in NSAs and a more gender balanced sport environment with more representation of women in NSA Boards the following recommendations are given:

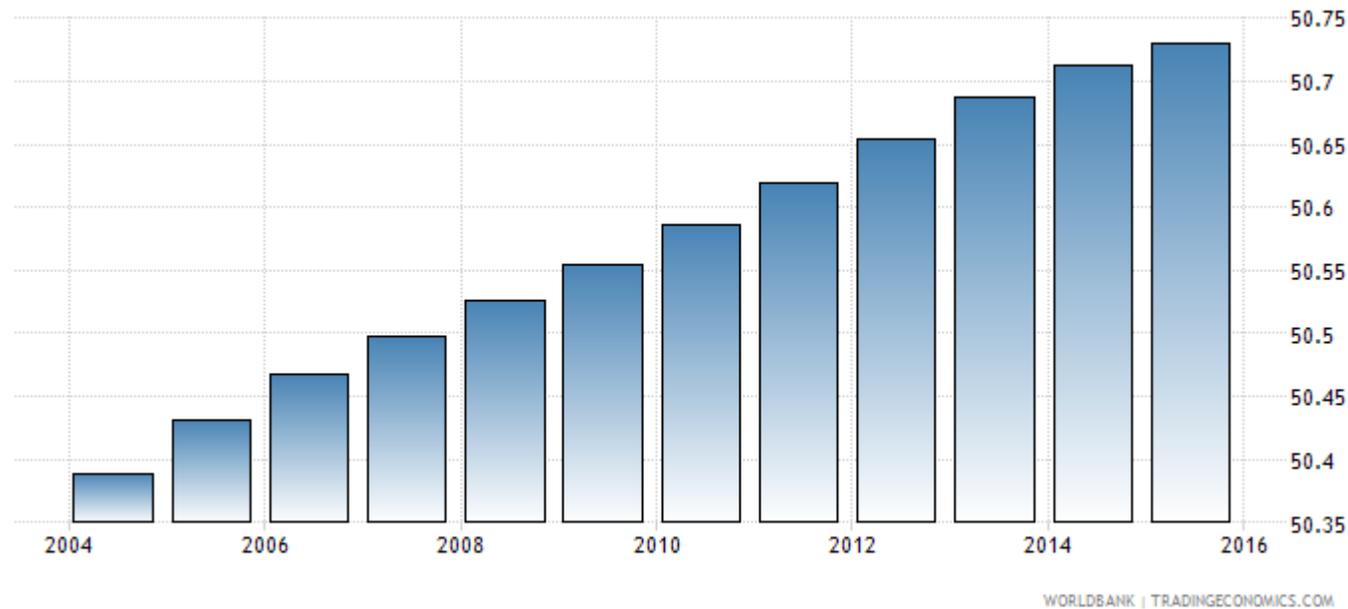
### **Development of Sport Gender policies**

The Ministry of Sport, Arts and Culture and SRC should ensure the development of sport gender policies and or strategies at all levels of sport that lead to gender equality between women and men. These should set targets, concrete actions and follow-up measures supporting sustainable development. Key to this will be development and implementation of transparent and clear gender friendly procedures concerning candidate identification for NSA board and leadership posts, election procedures and human resource policies. These should include gender balanced representation of women and men on the NSA board nomination committees seeking candidates for decision-making positions.

Furthermore, gender perspectives should be mainstreamed into all policies related to sport including budgeting and allocation of resources. All boards and executive committees of NSA should reflect the diversity of the individual members of the organization, executive boards in sport should evolve to gender balanced organizations with a minimum of 40% of women on executive boards and committees.

### **Involvement of women in policy development and crafting of NSAs constitutions**

Women should be involved in the development of policies and crafting of NSAs constitutions. Women need to have a greater voice in sport policy decisions that affect them. Their presence can play a critical role in helping to design measures that increase their representation in key decision making board which will ultimately result in increase in their participation in sport and physical activity, and harnessing sport as a tool to improve gender equity. The resulting constitutions, policies and programs are more likely to be relevant and effective if they include the perspective of girls and women.



### **Ensure gender balance on NSA boards**

It is an undisputable fact that better decision making and superior results are achieved if gender diversity is incorporated into senior decision making positions. Diverse boards bring in diverse styles of leadership and understanding of business. The SRC should ensure that NSAs adopt the same attitude with a larger focus on gender equality in sport, so that they can take full advantage of the leadership skills, opinions and experience of women and adequately reflect women’s needs. The Sports and Recreation Commission should set a target of a minimum of 40% representation of women in all NSA Boards being female by 2018 and reviewing and reporting on gender representation progress in NSA Boards during quarterly meetings .The Sport and Recreation Commission should ensure that all constitutions registered under them have enshrined rights on the representation of women within their constitution during the registration process.

### **Invest in building the capacity of the Women in Sport Foundation**

Ministry of Sport, Arts and Culture and the SRC in partnership with the non-governmental and private sector should invest in building the Women in Sport Foundation at the national, provincial and district level to broaden its reach. This will ensure women have an advocacy structure and an organized voice with capacity to engage government, private and nongovernmental organizations at all levels. Additionally the foundation can build valuable resources and partnerships in developing women in sport programs and vital sport-based approaches to enhancing gender equity in NSAs.

### **Gender sensitive recruitment and election systems**

The Sport and Recreation Commission should ensure that a gender sensitive recruitment and election of system for NSAs Executive Boards should be developed and compliance should be mandatory to ensure more gender balanced boards. Furthermore, NSAs should be trained to understand the value of having a diverse representation on the executive boards and committees. The training will help in changing the current male dominated perspective in sport and may result in increase in percentage of women representation in NSAs Boards.

### **Creating a women sport friendly environment**

Most NSAs are voluntary organizations and the nature of the work takes place in the evenings and weekends, the structure and organization need to be made more women and family friendly in order to attract more women into the boards. The gender order and patriarchal nature of our society demands a large amount of obligation to the family to women. Therefore, NSAs need to ensure that organizational structures of boards have more women friendly model in order to increase access of women to board position opportunities. Another key component in creating a women friendly sport environment is to ensure that the entire sport sector develops and implements anti-harassment and sexual abuse policies and procedures to protect women in the sport environment as they are very vulnerable.

### **Sport education for women**

Education and training of women who are already in decision-making positions and at the lower levels is needed to prepare them for assuming roles in NSAs boards and executive committees. It is also equally important that men are trained on the importance of having gender balanced boards in order to change the perspective of composition and representation of women in boards. Educational materials for all decision-makers in sport on the value of having a diverse representation on the executive boards and committees should be produced and shared among sport stakeholders.

### **Develop women in sport mentorship programme**

A Women in Sport Mentorship Programme should be developed to help budding and aspiring female sport leaders to develop skills and knowledge that will help them to become effective sport leaders who ultimately assume decision making positions and become part of NSA Boards and executive committees.

### **Gender Planning and Monitoring System**

A Gender Planning and Monitoring System with gender quality indicators including diversity and equity criteria in recruitment, education and training and other measures should be put in place to monitor women in NSAs boards and leadership positions at all levels.

### **Sport information and research**

Collecting gender-based data on sport funding, participation, athletes, and leadership is an important means of determining whether national sport policies and programs are resulting in an equitable distribution of resources, and equitable sport participation and competition opportunities for males and females. Therefore research on women and sport should be conducted to increase knowledge and understanding about women and sport. The SRC should ensure that the necessary research, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks are in place to attain gender equity policy goals in sport.

### **Establish Women in sport network**

Women in sport need to create a network comprised of different women from diverse sporting backgrounds and organizations that can influence and change perceptions of the Zimbabwean society on the participation of women in leadership positions in sport. This will create an enabling environment for women to exchange ideas, knowledge and skills and this might trigger increase of willingness by women to assume positions in NSA Boards.

## **2.0 Conclusion**

Conclusively gender equality is a fundamental principle embedded in the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013), the Gender Policy (2013), the Olympic and Paralympic Charters however there is a huge gap in the representation of women in NSAs in Zimbabwe. Women make up 52% of the population of Zimbabwe however the results of the survey evidently indicates that women are unrepresented within the NSA structures of Zimbabwe. The limited representation of women in boards provides limited and narrow insight and perspectives of women in key spheres of decision making in sport . The absence of women sport leader in NSA boards which are decision making structures deprive women their right and the sport industry of women's experiences, knowledge, skills and values which can enrich the development of sport .

## 2.1 Definitions

**Gender** identifies the social relations between men and women. It refers to the relationship between men and women, boys and girls, and how this is socially constructed. Gender roles are dynamic and change over time.

**Gender Analysis** Qualitative and quantitative assessments to determine the differential impacts of development activities on women and men and the effect that gender roles and responsibilities have on development efforts and to trace the historical, political, economic, social and cultural explanations for these differentials (McGregor and Basso, 2001)

**Gender Awareness** The recognition of the differences in the interests, needs and roles of women and men in society and how they result in differences in power, status and privilege. It also means the ability to identify problems arising from gender inequity and discrimination.

**Gender-based harassment** means unwelcome conduct related to a person's gender and has the effect or purpose of offending another person's dignity.

**Gender equality** the absence of discrimination on the basis of one's sex in the allocation of resources or benefits or in access to services

**Gender equity** Fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between men and women

**Gender Gap** A difference in any aspect of the socio economic status of women and men, arising from the different social roles ascribed by society for women and men

**Gender identity** is a person's sense of being male or female, resulting from a combination of genetic and environmental influences and a person's concept of being male and masculine or female and feminine, or ambivalent.

**Gender Issues/Concerns** A gender issue/concern arises when there is a discrepancy, discrimination and injustice

**Gender Indicator** An indicator that captures gender-related changes in society over time and in relation to a norm (Beck, in Taylor, 1999)

**Gender Mainstreaming** The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all the areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (ECOSOC , July 1997)

**Gender Neutral** The assumption that policies, programmes and project interventions do not have a gender dimension and therefore affect men and women in the same way. In practice, policies intended to be gender neutral can be gender blind

**Gender Policy** An organization's policy that integrates gender in the mainstream of its programme activities, where the policy also designates institutional arrangements, responsibilities, management functions and tools/guidelines for mainstreaming

**Gender Relations** Relations between men and women in terms of access to resources and decision-making and the relative positions of men and women in the division of resources, responsibilities, benefits, rights, power and privileges.

**Gender Roles** are learned behaviors in a given society/community or other special group that condition what activities, tasks and responsibilities are perceived as male or female. Gender roles are affected by age, class, race, ethnicity or religion and by the geographical, economic and political environment. Changes in gender roles often occur in response to changing economic, social or political circumstances. Both men and women play multiple roles in society. The gender roles of women can be identified as reproductive, productive and community managing roles, while men's are categorized as either productive or community politics. Men are able to focus on a particular productive role, and play their multiple roles sequentially. Women, in contrast to men, must play their roles simultaneously, and balance competing claims on time for each of them.

**Gender sensitivity** A mind set where people recognize or are aware of gender based discrimination which hinders enjoyment of human rights. It is an understanding and routine consideration of the social, cultural and economic factors underlying discrimination based on sex

**Gender stereotyping** Constant portrayal in the media, the press or in the education system, of women and men occupying certain roles according to the socially constructed gender division of labor and expectations in behavior (African Development Bank, The Gender Policy)

**Gender Systems** Systems which define attributes, ways of relating, hierarchies, privileges, sanctions and space in which men and women are organized. In most communities in Africa, women are dominated by men via patriarchal power, that has been a traditional and indeed a historical privilege for men

**Gender training** The provision of formal learning experiences and skills in order to increase gender analysis and awareness skills, which serve to recognize and address gender issues in the programming process. Training can include the three dimensions of political: introducing gender concepts and analysis, the professional: providing staff with "how-to" skills and the personal: challenging an individual's gender attitudes and stereotypes

**Sexual harassment** refers to behavior of a sexualized nature which is unwanted, exploitative, degrading, coerced, forced and/or violent programmes and projects

**Sexual abuse** means to trick, force or coerce a person into any sexual activity the person does not want, or is not sufficiently mature to consent to.

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## **2.4 Analysis guide**

### **Profile of NSA Committees**

- 1. How many women serve on current Executive Committees in NSAs ?*
- 2. What proportion do they constitute of the Executive Committee?*
- 3. For how long have they served?*
- 4. What roles do they play on the Executive Committee? In particular are they President, Secretary General, Treasurer (other)?*

## **Constitutions and Policy Analysis**

- 1. Does the organization have any formal policies in relation to gender equity in management of the NSA?*
- 2. Does the NSA have goals been formally adopted by the organization in respect of gender equity?*
- 3. Is the constitution or policy aligned to policy of the IOC and International Federations?*
- 4. Does the targets policy continue to be recognized/guide action?*
- 5. What measures have been adopted to promote the numbers of female candidates?*
- 6. Have these measures been evaluated? How successful have these been?*
- 7. Does the organization operate a specific commission or similar mechanism for addressing women in sport issues?*
- 8. Does this consider issues relating to women's involvement in the leadership and management of the organization?*
- 9. What was the nature of the electoral process according to policies and constitutions?*
- 10. How is the congress constituted in terms of gender representation?*

## **2.5 Glossary of Terms**

IF – International Federation

IOC – International Olympic

IPC- International Paralympic Committee

NSA – National Sport Association

SRC – Sport and Recreation Commission