

IFA GENDER EQUITY TOOLKIT

INTRODUCTION

Gender equity is a global topic across all areas of our lives, including Fistball.

You may have heard of the terms “gender equality” and “gender equity”, but ...

- What are they and what are their differences?
- Why is this important to sport and Fistball?

This toolkit provides especially Local Organising Committees (“LOCs”) with some information about gender equity, and well as some ideas / strategies for consideration in order to stage events that are more gender equitable.

What are gender equity and gender equality?

Gender equality entails *equal* rights, visibility, empowerment, and participation of all genders. It implies equal access to and distribution of resources and opportunities to all genders. It assumes the treatment of everyone the same, but does not take into account that individuals have different backgrounds, contexts, needs, capacities, abilities, interests, resources and such.

In the context of sport, gender equality ignores the fact that historical underrepresentation of women in sport has resulted in women – generally – starting from a lower foundation.

On the other hand, gender equity is the process of giving *fair treatment* to all individuals based on their needs, interests, experiences, irrespective of gender. When there is equity, all individuals receive the support they need to be on an equal platform. It is therefore crucial to achieve equity before achieving equality, because equity will lead to equality.

To sum, “Equality focuses on creating the same starting line for everyone. Equity has the goal of providing everyone with the full range of opportunities and benefits – the same finish line.”¹

All genders benefit from gender equity, and is important across all domains and global communities, be it in politics, business and economics, technology, sciences, including sport. Gender equity is not a term du jour. It is not simply about social justice and treating everyone with dignity and respect, but is an economic and political opportunity for all.

What is gender (versus sex)?

Biologically, humans are *usually* born male or female, i.e., born with female or male genitalia, and at birth, are assigned a sex based on their biology. In some instances (less than 2% of births globally), there are individuals who are born intersex (have both female and male genitalia).

¹ “What is Gender Equity?” – CAAWS, <https://www.caaws.ca/gender-equity-101/what-is-gender-equity/>



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Sex frequently determines gender (e.g., those born with male genitalia are determined to be men), however, some individuals do not identify with their assigned gender.

Gender is a social construct where certain behaviours, appearances, attitudes and roles have been imposed and are expected of men and women. Throughout history, constructed gender roles have influenced the opportunities of men and women in all spheres of life – including in sport – resulting in differences in access to opportunities and resources, certain stereotypes, bias and preconceived notions and ideals of men and women.

What does gender equity in sport mean?

Sport has always been stereotyped and inequalities remain entrenched in both overt and subtle ways.

Women and men have different needs, expectations and circumstances when it comes to sport. Gender equity in sport means acknowledging there have been historical contexts and differences, and approaching all aspects of organising sports fairly to give individuals and groups the support and opportunities necessary to help them be successful.

In terms of organising sports, it could mean addressing:

- Access to and participation for all genders at all levels and in all areas of sports
- Access to responsibilities and decision-making roles for teams, clubs, competitions
- Access to resources (financial and non-financial) and facilities
- Publicity and media coverage
- Sexism and gender-based violence such as harassment and abuse

Providing an environment in which all who participate can feel safe, free and equal is necessary to achieving a gender equitable outcome.

Why is gender equity in Fistball necessary?

Gender equity in Fistball is necessary to be in line with overall developments in global sports. Other reasons include:

- Gender equality and diversity are strategic goals of IFA; inclusiveness is a value.
- Consideration of IFA to be IOC Recognized.
- Narrowing the participation gap by gender. Approximately two out of three Fistball players in the world are men.
- Economic contribution to teams, clubs and competitions.
- Being representative of country demographics. In many countries, women and girls are approximately 50-50 of the population but are under represented in participation in sport.
- Better performance in terms of organisation and administration of clubs and teams, as it has been shown that diversity of perspectives can lead to improved decisions, mutual understanding, and higher rates of collaboration and motivation.
- The reality that women are increasingly expressing interest in involving themselves across all the various roles associated with Fistball: as athletes, coaches, spectators, commentators, managers, sponsors and more

Why is gender equity important for organising Fistball events?

Gender equity in event organisation touches on all areas of consideration in event organisation:

- LOC organising team
- Commercial
- Public relations and marketing
- Administration and athlete services
- Competition
- Venue facilities

- Logistics and operations
- Protocol

The organizing of event should give all involved a positive experience and extends far beyond looking after athletes who play the sport, but also considering tournament staff and volunteers, and those who spectate*.

** After all, many LOC members and volunteers play Fistball or have family and friends who play. Many athletes start from a young age and go on to coach or come back to spectate. Athletes can be fathers and mothers. The needs and expectations change over time based on individuals' roles and involvement in Fistball.*

Language use of Gender Equity

Around the world, gender remains a sensitive topic. There has been debate about the use of “womxn” (in English) and equivalent (other languages) to be inclusive of transgender women and non-binary women, as well as using gender-neutral nouns, pronouns and verbs such as they / them / their.

Use language that is inclusive and gender sensitive. Refrain from using words or phrases that *only* refer to his / him / he especially when there are other genders involved.

Compare this phrase:

- “Each athlete can collect his player’s pack at the registration desk” to
- “Player packs can be collected at the registration desk” or
- “Athletes can collect their player pack at the registration desk.”

The second phrase does not allude to gender and the third phrase does not allude to athletes being only men. The last two phrases are preferable.

ORGANISATION AND PERSONNEL

Consider including a position of Gender Equity Coordinator or creating a Gender Equity Committee. This individual or committee should have a direct line of communication to the LOC as well as to IFA present at the event.

Suggested responsibilities this person or committee would have:

- Develop the strategy and vision statement on gender equity
- Outline objectives of what the LOC wants to accomplish in terms of gender equity.
- Keep statistics on women’s participation (players, coaches, managers, advisers, spectators etc.) if available.
- Gender equity training as needed
- Ensure all aspects of tournament planning and the treatment of all are as gender equitable as possible. This could include:
 - Outlining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour
 - Imagery and media guidelines to ensure communications are free from gender stereotypes, biases or discrimination
 - Safeguarding policies
 - Supporting the handling of complaints against harassment and abuse
 - Receiving feedback and suggestions

Because LOCs operate in different countries where progress in gender equity differs, it’s important to have a plan and strategy that is appropriate for your country’s context. A strategy that works in Country A may not work in Country B.

LOC should in no way ever discriminate against a person due to gender. It is to consider:

- Gender make-up of the roles
- All genders are consulted and heard
- Decision-making includes the voices of all genders. For example:
 - A event schedule is not decided upon only by one gender group
 - If there is voting, the process and procedures should be gender inclusive

In some countries, LOCs may find it difficult to achieve 50:50 men to women staff. Research has indicated that women are less likely to apply for certain positions if they do not feel they can meet 100% of the job description², and they are less likely to step up to take on leadership positions.

Some questions to consider in the recruitment of Key Management Staff (KMS):

- What are your recruitment channels?
- Are candidates nominated or invited or do they need to apply?
- Are job descriptions inclusive and free of biases?
- Are specific actions being taken to attract women?
- What is the working culture of the LOC?
- Is there training for the various roles?
- What are the rules and processes for decision-making?

To attract female staff consider a mentoring program for interested women so that they understand the duties of staff roles, gain more confidence in being able to fulfil the roles, and will apply when an opportunity arises.

COMMERCIAL

Consider allocating budgets and resources relative to the needs of the various genders and divisions to achieve a more balanced outcome by gender and division.

Example:

Historically, the men's division has garnered more attention (measured by viewership) than the women's division. To attract the same amount of attention for the women's division as for men's division, LOCs may need to allocate more budget and resources for media campaigns to publicize the women's division.

Suggestion:

Consider allocating a part of the budget specifically for women's and girls' division, such as clinics, workshops, leadership training, coaching and such. This could be beneficial in places where there is an especially wide participation gap in Fistball by gender.

Sponsorship:

Approach potential sponsors being clear that gender equity is important in Fistball and seek those who are in alignment.

- Communications with sponsors should be free from gender stereotyping and biases (see below section on Public Relations and Marketing).
- Sponsors of IFA events should be aware their sponsorship supports all genders.

² Harvard Business Review, Why Women Don't Apply for Jobs Unless They're 100% Qualified, 2014, <https://hbr.org/2014/08/why-women-dont-apply-for-jobs-unless-theyre-100-qualified>

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

Research shows, globally, women make up 40% of sports participation, but only 4% of sports media coverage³. When promoting and marketing Fistball events, it is crucial to promote *all* genders. Promote the athletes / teams in a balanced way that does not perpetuate stereotypes or sexualise athletes. This includes:

- Written (such as press releases, newspaper and magazines)
- Verbal (such as radio interviews, podcasts)
- Visual (such as event logo, videos and photos)

The International Olympic Committee has some [portrayal guidelines](#) that you can refer to.

Women have also tended to be covered / broadcasted at time slots that garner less attention. Another piece of research indicated that less than 10% of sports-news is written by female journalists⁴.

The world is paying more attention to women's sport and viewership of women's sports (by all genders) has been increasing. Now is an opportune moment to raise the visibility of women in Fistball.

LOCs should have a communications strategy dedicated to raising the profile and visibility of female athletes in Fistball, with stories and images of the individuals and teams, *and* written by women.

- However, it is important not to make comparisons between genders, such as “she strikes like a woman”
- Avoid gendered descriptions such as girly / manly / feminine / masculine.
- Where feasible, organise a gender equity training / workshop for media

Social media and website:

- Ensure you use photos of all genders and divisions
- Schedule content for all genders
- Design a strategy such that all genders are given fair opportunity to be seen. For example, in website design, consider the use of carousel sliders for images and photos and alternate post schedules.
- Any hashtags used should be appropriate for all genders.

ADMINISTRATION AND ATHLETE SERVICES

The official working language of IFA is English and the local language will also be used as necessary. The meaning and choice of words are important to be mindful of; any communication in the local language should take into account the cultural context of gender.

Site visits should assess if the facilities are sufficient and inclusive for all genders. Some questions for LOCs to include:

- Toilet and changing room facilities
 - Are there baby-changing stations⁵?
 - Are there facilities for lactating mothers⁵?
 - What are the sanitation standards?
 - Are there more toilets for women than for men?
- Child care services⁵
 - Are there services / facilities at the venue (or nearby) that are accessible?
 - If there aren't readily available services / facilities, is it possible to arrange?

³ Tucker Centre, 2014, Media Coverage & Female Athletes <https://www.cehd.umn.edu/tuckercenter/projects/mediacoverage.html>

⁴ International Sports Press Survey 2011

⁵ Tip: Ask teams if there will be babies / children in the tournament. LOCs can also survey needs and accommodate to the extent it's practical (e.g., children's camps or activities).

- **Lighting in and around venue**
 - Especially when it gets dark, is there sufficient light?
 - Does the lighting extend to the periphery / outskirts of the venue?
- **Location of the venue**
 - How far is the venue from city centres or transportation links?
 - Is it easily accessible by transportation?
 - What is the surrounding neighbourhood? Is it safe?
- **Transportation links**
 - Do they require a long walk?
 - Is the transportation frequent and adequate?
- **Parking**
 - Can there be designated spots closer to playing fields for pregnant or disabled staff and spectators?
- **Camping**
 - If there is camping, can there be men-only, unisex and women-only areas?

Include in the Bulletins:

- Clear and practical information on any gender-specific policies LOC have.
- Set expectations for all athletes to be inclusive and prevent any form of gender based sexism or violence.
- Communicate what is acceptable and not acceptable behaviour and language.
- Inform all athletes what are consequences if not followed.
- Provide tips on precautionary measures for all at all times. For example:
 - Travel in groups or have a buddy system, especially at night
 - Teammates inform each other and coaches what plans are outside of games
 - Check-in system (for younger players)
- Include contact details for any complaints and how to proceed.

COMPETITION

Games

- Games should encompass all genders.
- Take into account the signalling effect of scheduling.
 - In many events historically, the men's division has been allocated the most visible time slot.
 - LOCs may consider alternating the schedule.

Fields and playing schedule

Allocate time slots and fields fairly across all genders:

- Access to the "best quality" or "most visible" pitch and times
- Access to toilets and changing room facilities and tournament central

Streaming and commentating

- Ensure all genders are equally streamed and commentated.
- If there is more than 1 commentator, have gender representation from all genders. Ensure commentators are trained as to what is appropriate and acceptable language, what is gender sensitive and how to avoid comparisons by gender.
 - Be aware to be gender sensitive
 - Avoid comparisons by gender.

- If coaches or players are interviewed at half time, or there is a pre- and post- event press conference, ensure representation of all genders.

If athletes are rewarded, ensure equal prizes and awards for all genders.

VENUE FACILITIES

Not only should there be sufficient toilets, cleanliness, and proximity to pitches but there should be consideration for gender specific needs.

Consider having toilets and changing rooms that are inclusive of all genders, or certain stations that are unisex, and or private / standalone / single.

- Women often need longer to use the toilet; so there should be more toilets for women?⁶
- If toilets are unisex or portable toilets, is there both a urinal and toilet bowl?

Toilets and changing room facilities are typically indicated with images of men and women. LOCs may consider gender inclusive signage (for example, imagery for men, women and transgender).

Sufficient toiletries such as paper are mandatory, as are soap, bins for menstrual products and waste, and the ability to purchase sanitation and menstrual products.

Particularly at events where LOCs expect mothers to join (as athletes or spectators), consider the availability of clean lactation rooms.

- If not, can LOCs provide a designated tent / space that is spacious and private?

Medical services

- Include both male and female medical staff, physiotherapists, chiropractors etc.
- Medical facilities should be safe for all genders, including access to privacy for treatment as needed.

SAFEGUARDING AGAINST HARASSMENT, ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

It is mandatory to create an environment where all participants can play sports, all tournament staff and volunteers can work, and all spectators can watch games comfortably and freely.

LOC – and specifically the gender equity coordinator or committee – can and have to set up procedures to mitigate any form of harassment, abuse or violence according to the IFA SAFE SPORT POLICY SAFEGUARDING ATHLETES AND PARTICIPANTS FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND ABUSE⁷

Suggestion:

LOCs can consider setting up a post-event process to understand if participants and staff felt the tournament treated all genders fairly. Any feedback can also be used as learning opportunities for the future. Current LOCs can then use any information to help set up a strong foundation and precedence for future LOCs to further gender equity in Fistball events and share ideas with IFA.

PROTOCOL

Event ceremonies

- Flag bearers should include all genders (if applicable).

⁶ <https://time.com/3653871/womens-bathroom-lines-sexist-potty-parity>

⁷ https://www.ifa-fistball.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/10_IFA-Safe-Sport-Policy-2020.pdf

Closing ceremony

- Often, the men's division receive their awards last, signalling and giving a perception this is the most important event. LOCs can consider alternating the presentation schedule.
- Volunteers and medal presenters should include representatives of all genders for all roles (for example, avoid having only women be medal bearers and men present medals).

Social events

While socials and parties are a fantastic opportunity for athletes and staff to meet and mingle, they need to be in a fun, safe environment for all genders to interact with each other.

Gender equity workshops

For the organizing of any future Fistball events LOCs could consider hosting gender equity workshops. Such workshops and events can be helpful for delegates to learn from each other, share perspectives and ideas as well as take charge to lead the gender movement in their prospective countries.

See also good examples from other sports.

WFDF Women in Sport Workshop hosted at AOUGC 2019

The WFDF Women in Sport Commission held its first ever regional workshop at the Asian-Oceanic Ultimate and Guts Championship (AOUGC 2019) in Shanghai on July 25, 2019. The event was well attended with 50 attendees from 13 regional countries, with men making up a third of the group.

The aim of the workshop was to help people understand the importance of gender equality and equity in Disc Sports, so that they can help develop their communities back home.

"This session was a good realisation of where we are now and what we have accomplished, said Map Pangilian, Team Captain Philippines Women's Team. "I know there is a lot of work to be done still. But we are making progress in terms of building female leaders, creating opportunity for more females to be active in these sports and to build a culture that is highly encouraging for males and females alike. And it makes me really proud."



Photo credit: Philippine Ultiverse

SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to specially thank the World Flying Disc Federation and its WFDF Women in Sport Commission for allowing us to adopt their developed Gender Equity Toolkit for Fistball.

In 2017 WFDF and IFA signed a Memorandum of Understanding. IFA is very much pleased to have established with WFDF a cooperation on many fields as there are Sustainability, Anti-Doping, Ethics and Good Governance or Para-Sport activities, manifested by this memorandum.

If you would like to comment, contribute or contact the WFDF Women in Sport Commission please e-mail to womeninsport@wfdf.sport. If you would like to contact the IFA Women in Sport Commission please use office@ifa-fistball.com.

APPENDIX 1: GENDER EQUITY CHECKLIST

- Familiarize yourself with some basic gender equity information. Read the section Primer
- Consider adding a role of Gender Equity Coordinator to your LOC
- Ensure communications and marketing are inclusive and appropriate for all genders
- Use site visits to ensure facilities are safe for all involved
- Ensure fair allocation of pitches and scheduling during competition
- Consider venue facilities take into account different needs and circumstances of gender
- Organise a gender equity workshop (if feasible)
- Familiarize yourself with safeguarding policies against harassment and abuse