

Women in Sports: Experiences of the Suriname Olympic Committee

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Abstract : Advocating for gender equality in sports is a global struggle but a greater challenge for small nations with weak economies like Suriname, a Dutch-speaking country in the Caribbean. This paper presents the experience of the Suriname Olympic Committee (SOC) in addressing gender inequality in sports in the global context of the policies implemented by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The case of Suriname is interesting because it shows the results of a small nation in creating protective measures. The SOC has succeeded in developing a code of conduct for sports and is now taking steps to establish a sports justice institute. All of this is happening in a situation where there are few women leaders in sport: only three of the seventeen national member federations are led by women, and there are two women on SOC's 9-member board. Three arguments are made. First, gender inequality in sports in Suriname is a reflection of national power structures and cultural barriers to women in sports. Second, IOC policies and resources to reduce gender inequality in sports, while important, do not guarantee national change. Third, and more importantly, the SOC has addressed gender inequality with an approach based on the principles of "walk the talk" and "trial and error." All three arguments are elaborated on using the framework of intersectionality. The study draws empirically on data collected during and on SOC Gender and Sport Commission seminars and workshops, including two surveys, transcripts, and newspaper articles.

Keywords : Caribbean, gender inequality, safeguarding, Suriname Olympic Committee

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