



A POSITION PAPER ON THE DISCRIMINATION FACED BY MASCULINE-PRESENTING WOMXN IN SPORT

Introduction

Who are masculine presenting Womxn?

The World Health Organization (WHO) Trusted Source note that gender is a social construction that people typically describe in terms of femininity and masculinity. In most African cultures, people associate femininity with women and masculinity with men, but this social construction varies across cultures.

However, gender is not neatly divided along the binary lines of "man" and "woman."

It depends on how they identify as a person, and this can change over time.

The use of the term 'Womxn' is used severally in this document to signify the inclusion all Individuals assigned female at birth with varied sexual identities and gender expression.

Womxn can identify as more masculine, more feminine, a combination of both, or neither. How a person expresses or describes their gender is personal to them. A Person's gender identity is not restricted to being either a man or a woman.

Some people do not identify with any gender, while others identify with multiple genders.

Background

Football is a powerful tool for social development. Social development is about improving the well-being of every individual in society so they can reach their full potential.

Success of a community is linked to the well-being of each and every citizen. Football is not just physical activity, it promotes health (physical and mental) and education, fosters cognitive development, teaches social behaviour and helps social cohesion. Football can be used to increase the social capital and social integration of womxn into the wider community, as well as empowering them and giving them skills that will help them give back to the community.

The long-standing lack of women in positions of responsibility in the football community means there have been limited voices to advocate for change. In 2016, the FIFA Congress made the first steps to rectify this problem by approving some landmark decisions for women's football and the representation of women in football

FIFA has dedicated 1.5 billion dollars to help advance the women's game up to the year 2022 and seeks to register 60 million players by 2026 within the context of realizing its strategic roadmap to **grow the game of football, protect its integrity and bring the game to all**. The organization has defined the following women's football-specific goals:

- Grow participation
- Enhance the commercial value
- Build the foundations

On 14 July 2021, the Kenyan Football Federation (FKF) unveiled its new women's football strategy, which aims to help highlight and develop the enormous potential of women's football in Kenya. The strategy aims to develop five key pillars;

- Grassroots and Youth Football,
- Leagues and Competitions

- Club licensing, National teams/ Centers of Excellence,
- Capacity Building
- Marketing & Branding of women football.

FKF currently has 2800 girls participating in football and are looking to build the number to at least 50,000 to participate in the 2023 and 2027 World Cups

Problem definition

The Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Youth and Sports in collaboration with UNICEF introduced the National Women Premier League in 2010 with an aim to develop women football in the country.

Womxn in sport still face barriers when trying to enter and participate in Soccer. They face discrimination and harrassment at all levels from the community and recreational levels to the professional and elite levels based on their sexual orientation and gender expression as masculine presenting Womxn.

Players participating in women football in Kenya are most often physically, psychologically or socially raised as females. All players whose femininity is in question always face degrading and unwarranted invasion of their privacy, stigma and discrimination and violation of their rights. On the other hand several intersex players without physical characteristics learn about them after being forced to undergo gender testing.

Womxn's football development has experienced challenges over the years largely due to lack of established structures and pathways for aspiring Womxn footballers, coaches and administrators.

Many sponsors run away or refuse to invest their money in a team because of lack of strategy and others feels that their money may be wasted.

Policy frameworks that engage women in sports

- Women Football Strategy FIFA 2.0

- Womens football strategy CAF 2020-2023
- Womens football strategy 2021-2027 FKF
- Rules-and-regulations-governing-kenyan-football-2019
- FKF integrity action plan 2021-2023
- FKF-LEAGUES-Structure-NEC-resolution (1)
- FKF-Constitution

Position statement

Article 3 Human rights FKF is committed to respecting all internationally recognized human rights and shall strive to promote the protection of these rights and Article 4 (1) (2) speaks on Neutrality, Non-Discrimination gender equality and stance against racism. FKF is neutral in matters of party politics and religion and Discrimination of any kind against a country, private person or group of people on account of race, skin color, ethnic, national or social origin, gender, disability, language, religion, political opinion or any other opinion, wealth, birth or any other status, sexual orientation or any other reason is strictly prohibited and punishable by suspension or expulsion and or disciplinary actions.

Our position is that stigma and Discrimination is widely experienced by Many Masculine presenting Womxn in football. Some of the ways that they experience stigma and discrimination. Football in Kenya and sports in general is divided in two categories; female and male which are very distinct. Policies, systems and structures should not assume that all players fit neatly in those two boxes. This is that main source of disadvantage for masculine presenting Womxn in football. Inclusion dictates that everyone is meaningfully, deliberately and safely brought on board.

Their Inability to fully participate in football that is traditionally male centric and patriarchal football is evident and when they do participate, they face systematic discrimination in team selection, equal pay, access to gender neutral

facilities, positive reinforcement ,lack of mental health services, media coverage and sponsorship opportunities by coaches and team managers

The Lack of adoption of inclusive policies and proper regulatory frameworks of institutions in National and County parliaments as well as sports organisations in The FKF's Women Fourth (Bottom) tier league also referred to as the FKF Women County League is predominantly evident.

There also lies a Lack awareness and resources to implement the Womens Football strategy 2021-2027 which seeks to enhance grassroots Womxn's capacities to participation is football and anti-stigma and discrimination education.

Recommendations

- **Increasing the level of female participation in football FKF Women County League**
Implement new programmers and initiatives to broaden participation, many of which will seek to improve upon existing pathways for Womxn to participate and add unique dimensions to the game to work diligently to ensure that more women have increased access to football in all four tiers of womxn's football league
- **Introduce new competitions designed to retain non binary participation in football and provide greater opportunities for Womxn to play the game they love. Examples include: Youth development tournaments**
- **Advocate for the Implementation of a distinct brand strategy for the County womxn's game that inspires players and fans and gives the game a new identity to complement men's football and enrich the game's overall image**
- **Advocating for club licensing system as a development tool to raise the standards of clubs and leagues and**

accelerate the development of the game at all levels.

- **Create a sharing platform for exchange of expertise and knowledge on the professionalization of womxn's football.**
- Develop specific anti stigma and discrimination educational and awareness programmes for players and football professionals involved in the womxn's game.
- Leverage on grassroots competitions and events to address specific social issues faced by women and girls (e.g. health, empowerment, equality, mental health stigma and discrimination
- The Media to report and cover the Womxn football games with the same rhetoric as the male counter parts.
- Foster awards and recognition of players and teams that to boost morale and make women football competitive.

References

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