These principles were commissioned by the State Government of Victoria, and were produced by Swinburne and La Trobe Universities in partnership with Adjunct Associate Professor Sue Dyson.

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Aboriginal acknowledgement

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples, Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal communities are steeped in traditions and customs built on an incredibly disciplined social and cultural order. This social and cultural order has sustained up to 50,000 years of existence. We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community in addressing and preventing family violence, and join with our First Peoples to eliminate family violence from all communities.
Violence against women and gender equality: what has it got to do with sport?

Introduction

Why are we talking about sport, gender equality and violence against women? Violence against women is a serious and preventable social problem and the Victorian Government is committed to preventing it from occurring. Sport and recreation venues are places where people gather, as participants, volunteers, players and spectators, so it is one of the major institutions to reach people to convey the message that violence against women is never acceptable, and can be prevented.

Prevention focuses not on the actual experience of violence, although responding to victims and ensuring their ongoing safety is important, but on addressing drivers of violence, which include:

- Condoning violence against women
- Men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s decision-making and independence in public and private life
- Rigid gender roles and stereotypes about what it means to be a man or a woman
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

Prevention is about addressing the social conditions that are behind violence against women. The evidence shows that sporting clubs and recreation centres are important places to address the drivers of violence against women because they are places where:

- Rigid gender roles and expectations about masculinity and femininity may still dominate.
- Codes of mateship may foster sexism and emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women in general, and men who do not practice traditional forms of masculinity.

Prevention activities focus on the places where people live, work and play. This includes (among others) schools, workplaces, faith based communities and sport. This does not assume that violence against women is more common in any of these places rather that these are good places to communicate with a wide range of people about prevention.

In the past, sport and recreation has been to a large extent male dominated. Just as gender roles and expectations are changing in society, change is happening in sporting clubs, but there is room for improvement.

Creating gender equality and preventing violence against women is everybody’s business

The aim of prevention is to create cultures that equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive for everyone, regardless of their gender, gender identity, race, religion, culture, sexual orientation or any kind of difference.

Gender equality is about women and men alike. Women may experience barriers to equal representation, it is often believed that leadership positions are too stressful for women. Equally, men who willingly assume stereotypically ‘feminine’ roles also come in for pressure to ‘man up’, suggesting that their masculinity is in question. Values and attitudes about gender roles do not split neatly down gender lines, and it is likely that you will be met with resistance from both women and men. Although resistance is likely, there are many people who are already living gender equality in their relationships and in their work. The work of prevention is not about turning individuals’ lives upside-down, it is about making your sport or recreation venue equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive for everyone.
The reason for implementing primary prevention is violence against women. The approach is to address the drivers of violence against women to prevent it happening in the first place. To address these drivers of violence it is important to:

- Challenge rigid gender stereotypes, and eliminate sexist cultures
- Share on and off field decision making roles and responsibilities equitably between women and men.
- Create cultures that are safe, inclusive and respectful.

This must occur at every level in the hierarchy, from the national, through state, regional and local levels.

**Approaches to primary prevention**

There are five main strategies used to implement primary prevention [1]. Every level of the sport and recreation hierarchy illustrated in Figure One (below) has a role to play in this. The strategies must challenge the attitudes and behaviours that drive violence against women. Any one of the strategies described below is important, however, each one on its own does not constitute primary prevention; rather, a comprehensive approach that draws on each of the strategies is needed for effective prevention.

**Policy, facility and guideline reform:** in sport and recreation this means reviewing and revising policies, rules and codes of conduct to ensure that they are aligned with external policy and legislative requirements. Policies and codes of conduct should also enshrine equality, respect and inclusion at all levels of sport. Revised policies and guidelines must also be communicated to all members and participants to ensure the culture of the sport is reflected both on and off the field.

**Communications and social marketing:** involves a range of strategies to communicate with members and spectators and raise awareness about the drivers of violence against women. This might include special events and days, for instance in sport events such as White Ribbon Breakfasts, International Women’s Day events or orange rounds⁶. In recreation clubs and gyms this might involve posters that promote gender equality, and communicate codes of behaviour. Key messages should focus on values of equality, respect and inclusion.

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**Organisation development:** In sport this can apply to sport as a workplace, with employees, volunteers and members. The organisational culture of sport should influence the ways in which individuals behave towards each other and are perceived by those outside the sport. This requires a whole of organisation approach – informed both from the top-down and from the bottom-up – to ensure an equal, respectful and inclusive environment for everyone. Sport and recreation organisations, clubs and groups that model equal, inclusive, and respectful gender relations are not only perceived positively from the outside but also play an important role in preventing violence against women.

**Direct participation:** programs engage and involve men, women, children and young people in building knowledge about, and practicing the skills for equal, respectful, relationships and develop positive social networks. In sport this might involve information sessions, involvement in community events, or simply accepting changes in a club environment and having conversations with acquaintances, friends, and family about gender equality or taking action as an ethical bystander.

**Community mobilisation and collaboration:** encourages communities to change social norms such as condoning violence, sexism and rigid gender roles, which drive violence against women. In sport this might involve forming partnerships with other sport clubs or codes, or with external agencies such as community or women’s health services which have some expertise in primary prevention. In recreation clubs and gyms this might include similar partnerships and collaborations that help to focus on cultural change that addresses the drivers of violence against women and gender inequality.
In 2017 a two-day round table consultation was convened with representatives from a range of sports who have experience in primary prevention and culture change. Based on research into existing primary prevention in sport, and advice from the consultation, a series of values statements and principles for implementing programs in sport have been identified. Two stages are suggested, 1) before you begin, and 2) implementation. Scattered throughout there are examples that share key learnings from sport programs that worked, and further information about the area being discussed.

### Before you begin

1. **Plan for Positive Change**

   To ensure our sport is equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive we carefully prepare the environment to ensure everyone understands and is ready for positive change.

   Working towards culture change in sport and recreation venues is all about positive change. In this section there are three key principles for ensuring your sport is ready, and some suggested strategies from the research and the round table consultation to help with getting ready.

   **Principle 1.1: Establish an authorising environment**

   Gender equality is supported by National, State and Local Governments, as well as most public and private sector agencies. This adds legitimacy to state, regional and community based change programs. When embarking on a program it is important to communicate with everyone that the plans are supported by your sport, and by wider institutions and organisations. It is also important that your sport’s governing body supports the changes, this gives regional and local level initiatives the authority to introduce changes.

   An authorising environment can lead to positive change. In 2009 Moreland City Council found that only 8% of the people using their facilities and grounds for organised sport activities were women. As a result, they developed a policy that gave greater access to those sports that actively encouraged the participation of women and girls, creating an authorising environment for clubs wanting to use the grounds. Ten years on there has been a 161% increase in participation; as a result, both the council and clubs contribute towards gender equality and changing the drivers of violence against women.

   **Principle 1.2: Good Governance.**

   Good governance is central to ensuring that boards at every level, and committees of management in community groups are effective at leading the organisation they serve while also meeting their legal and compliance responsibilities. The Victorian Government provides a quick reference guide to ten principles of good governance to help your board or committee understand what is required for good governance. For primary prevention it is also important that:

   - Both women and men are meaningfully involved in management and gender equality is the aim; roles and responsibilities are allocated regardless of gender.
   - Men and women are meaningfully engaged in all on and off field roles, regardless of gender stereotypes.

2 See, for example, the National Plan, the Victorian Plan, and Victorian Local Government web sites.
3 See, for example, the AFL’s Respect and Responsibility Policy, and the NRL, ARU and Netball Australia’s programs.
Principle 1.3: Work with partners

Many local government, health and education services are already working to promote gender equality. Partnerships not only provide you with access to expertise, they can give you access to a wider community working towards preventing violence against women. Women’s Health Services, Community Health and Local Government are all engaged in gender equality and primary prevention work, and many partnerships already exist. Some sports are already engaged in culture change work and establishing partnerships will give you access to a wealth of knowledge and experience, regardless if the partnership consists of a few meetings or co-delivered events.

The Rural Challenge is a program led by Macedon Ranges Shire and Bendigo City Council in partnership with Women’s Health Loddon Mallee, and regional sports assemblies, the CFA and community sport clubs. This has resulted in a number of partnerships, for example, the regional sports assembly, Sports Focus has linked up with Women’s Health Loddon Mallee to develop Bystander Action training specifically for delivery in community clubs. This will be rolled out in the region in 2018.

Strategies and suggestions

Sport and recreation experts at the round table consultation suggested some ideas for making prevention work.

Counter negative arguments: When it comes to gender equality in sport, a common argument is “keep politics out of sport”. Ideas like this can represent fear of change, and often the loudest voices are taken to be everyone’s opinion. While there are some who challenge the efforts to make sport equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive, others will think it is a good idea. It is likely that both of these positions will be present in your sport, and rather than backing down, the round table experts suggested the following ways of addressing resistance:

- Use positive language when talking about change – focus on potential gains rather than possible losses.
- Share stories about examples of change programs in sport that are already working well and highlight role models, for example, elite sports people who stand up for gender equality, inclusion and preventing violence against women.

Community clubs in the Essendon and District League involved in the AFL Victoria’s Fair Game Respect Matters program increased female participation by:

- Actively recruiting women to join the committee of management in decision making roles.
- Clubs that only had men’s teams amalgamated with local netball teams
- Other clubs offered female football and recruited female coaches, score keepers and umpires to increase the participation of women.
- Many clubs formed women’s groups and held women’s events to advise on how to become more inclusive.

2. Incorporate Evaluation

To ensure our sport is equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive we plan our approach carefully, and incorporate evaluation into those plans.

Principle 2.1: Become a learning organisation

One of the strengths of sport and recreation is that continuous improvement in the game or activity is a goal. A learning organisation is one that has goals, is flexible, capable of adapting to change and that taps into everyone’s capacity to learn and change. People get involved in sport – whether as a leader, manager, player, club member, official or volunteer – because it is a meaningful experience that connects them to something bigger than themselves. Just as the principles of continuous learning and improvement apply to team sports and individual athletes, so they can be applied in organisations; it is these organisations that survive and thrive. For more about learning organisations check out this YouTube clip – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40meQNZ13KU.

As mentioned above, everyone in your sport may not be ready for change, but it is possible to bring people along with you by creating an environment where ideas can be discussed, and knowledge and information shared respectfully. Events, policy reform and other approaches to change can create opportunities for conversations to take place, but these must happen respectfully, so be clear from the start what you mean by respect.
Respect can mean different things to different people. One way of understanding respect is as obedience to authority. This is not the meaning intended when we refer to a respectful environment. When we talk about respect here we refer to positive social rules and personal attributes, not only what one does or thinks, but how one is as a person. Respect as a part of good sporting behaviour has been more closely associated with personal attributes such as equality, caring and acceptable ways of behaving towards others. In sport and recreation settings this is one of the key strengths that can be built on to ensure equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments at every level.

**Principle 2.2: Establish a business case**

Gender equality is good for business; it attracts more participants, and at least in some cases can result in better allocation of playing fields by local government or governing body. Whether it is at a community, regional, state or national level, making sure your sport is equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive is good business. It can lead to increased membership and more spectators at games, to a larger pool of volunteers, it can create a positive social environment. This in turn can be good for the bottom line, bring in new players and contribute to developing new talent, as well as access to funding and increased revenue.

When preparing for change, it is important to communicate the benefits to members, and developing a business case can help to establish the worth, or value of your project or program. Putting together evidence for establishing an equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment in your sport will help you to articulate a clear argument about benefits it will bring to the club. It is important to remember that a business case is an important adjunct to planning but should never replace it. The outcome of your business plan should be two-fold; a clear argument for why the changes are important, and a clearly articulated goal for any proposed changes.

Positive change can be good for business in unexpected ways. In AFL Victoria’s *Fair Game Respect Matters* program, one community club that worked to create an equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment not only gained increased membership, but also moved in one season from the bottom of the ladder to winning a premiership.

**Principle 2.3: Plan for a positive environment**

Involve as many people as possible in planning for change. Allow enough time to make sure as many people as possible have a chance to contribute. A planning process that works well is a logic model. This provides a framework for action that works through what you want to achieve and the steps and resources you will need to get there, how you will know if it is working (indicators) and how you will measure or understand the process, outcomes and impact of your initiative. There is no one way of developing a logic model. Some excellent guides for implementing programs and developing logic models to address the drivers of violence against women are available online. If you have little experience in planning, it might be best to bring in a facilitator to help you to work through the process. This is where partnerships can be helpful.

Plans must be realistic, manageable, achievable and written in plain language that everyone can understand. The evidence for effective change in sport suggests that:

- Programs should be based on an understanding about the drivers of violence against women (rigid gender stereotypes, sexist cultures, gender inequality).
- There is no one way to do primary prevention; whatever you do it must be practical and relevant for your sport and its members – whether you are in a community club, or at the regional, state or national level.

**Principle 2.4: Evaluation is essential and part of the planning process**

Evaluation is the process by which we judge the worth or value of something. It is about more than measuring success or failure. It should involve asking questions and reflecting on the answers. Evaluation plans should start at the beginning of a program and involve an ongoing process of planning, implementation and review. It should not be an afterthought, but linked with the program goal and objectives.

There are a number of reasons why it is important to evaluate, for example, if you are receiving funding you will be accountable for not only the way you use the funds, but also the outcome or impact of the project you undertook. If you hope to receive funding again, it is important to be able to measure and understand what worked and what did not work and why so that you can learn from mistakes and build on strengths in the future. Perhaps most importantly, just as in sport you have post-game or match review after a game to help improve in future, evaluating social programs helps to improve and inform future plans.
As a program or project develops it goes through different stages, and evaluation at these stages focuses on different things. As a project gets underway, evaluation is **formative**, and aims to understand what is going on as it develops. **Process**, or **summative** evaluation aims to understand what has been achieved at the end of the project and **impact** evaluation seeks to understand whether the outcomes have been sustained over time. This involves follow up months or even years later.

To be really effective, evaluation incorporates an ongoing process of reflection and review to identify problems early and correct them. This is known as continuous improvement, and is central to a learning environment.

**Strategies and suggestions**

**Who should evaluate your program?** Whether to self-evaluate or bring in an external evaluator is the first decision. Self-evaluation can be seen as lacking integrity and external evaluation can be expensive. Some evaluators will use a modified approach called collaborative evaluation, where responsibilities are shared under the guidance of an expert. This approach can be less expensive. Regardless of the approach you use, if you are applying for funding be sure to budget to cover an allocation for evaluation.

**Seek support and advice from experts.** Communities of practice can be an excellent way of doing this. This is when a group of people with a common interest come together to share ideas and strategies. These groups can be formal or informal. It might be a formal group working on projects with similar interests, which meets monthly with a facilitator – which can work well for managers and paid workers. It might also be an informal group of volunteers with shared interests that meets socially every few months and to share information and ideas. Another way to get support is to seek out people working in the same area to get advice and share ideas. Remember that in this work you are not alone, everyone is learning as they go and most people working in the area will be willing to provide support and advice.

Discuss successes and challenges. Whether you decide to meet with experts, or peers doing the same kind of work, make sure you talk about both challenges and what works. At the round table the importance of ‘failures’ was discussed. The experts urged us to redefine ‘failure’ and celebrate it as a learning experience. This is how we can learn and adapt plans to overcome difficulties, it is also how we get support when times are tough. Evaluation that works alongside your program, identifies challenges and provides feedback is another way of learning from mistakes and correcting them.

Celebrate and promote successes. Just as it is important to redefine failure as a learning experience, it is important to celebrate successes, large and small. When you have achieved a goal, noticed positive changes or received external recognition for your work, share that with members. These are their successes too and building on success reinforces the value of the program to your sport.

**Implementation**

3. **Values Statement: Capacity Building**

To ensure our sport is equal, safe, inclusive, and welcoming we build capacity among leaders and members and support them as they introduce the plans.

**Principle 3.1: Skills development**

There is a tendency in primary prevention programs to think that the answer is bringing in an expert and running training for everyone. At the round table the experts argued that training is important, but questioned it as the only answer to promoting equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments in sport. The most important question raised by the round table is when, where, who should be trained and how. These questions are still being investigated, however, the experts did advise that trainers must understand sports contexts and be able to ‘talk the talk’, and be relevant to the context of the sport.

**Resources for change in clubs.** VicHealth has developed resources and tools to help Victorian community sports clubs become more inclusive and welcoming of everyone in their community. Everyone Wins is a toolkit that specifically aims to help clubs increase the involvement of women and girls, Aboriginal people and people from culturally diverse communities. The tools, actions and resources provided in this toolkit help clubs build on their existing strengths. These resources are available free to everyone online. **Play by the Rules** is another free online site that provides resources to help clubs become safe, fair and inclusive.
National, state and regional levels in sport are often workplaces, and workers have an important role in providing support and advice to community clubs. At this level training is important, both to ensure that workplace standards are met, and that the workers understand primary prevention and their role in supporting community clubs to meet the standards for their sport.

Training may also be appropriate for community club leaders to prepare them for not only leading change in their club but also ensuring that changes are sustained beyond their tenure. Many sports have also included respectful behaviours education sessions for young members and players and this has been successful when elite sportsmen and women have played a leadership role. In addition, these kinds of sessions can contribute to schools’ respectful relationships programs, and so reinforce the importance of primary prevention.

**Principle 3.2: Use adult learning principles**

Regardless of the when, where, and who should be trained, for the ‘how’ it is essential that training should not take the form of lectures or PowerPoint shows, but should instead use adult learning principles. Adults learn best when the approach is flexible, participatory, and appropriate to context. Further, their own expertise and knowledge should be respected and drawn on, and discussion and questioning encouraged [3].

**GippSport 50/50 program** included staff training on gender equality, the development of club resources on gender equity, a gender audit of the sporting club, and upgrading of club facilities. These measures resulted in increased female membership, and more women in active volunteer roles.

**Principle 3.3: Build on Strengths**

Communities and individuals in communities have many strengths, and it is important to recognise these and build on them as part of a primary prevention approach. This means rather than only focusing on what is wrong, the focus should equally be on these strengths. This means making visible and valuing the skills, knowledge, connections and potential in any part of sport [4].

For example, many elite sportsmen and women are speaking out against violence against women, and some act as ambassadors or role models. In some sports elite athletes have been trained to deliver training or speak to groups about the importance of equality and inclusion in sport. These people can be assets upon which to draw when introducing primary prevention at the local or regional level.

**Resources for prevention programs** In Melbourne’s West, eighteen local government and health and other community organisations have partnered to develop the Preventing Violence Together regional plan. The plan is designed to be appropriate to the specific needs of the region, and has a Resource Hub of gender equity resources available online. Our Watch, as part of the National Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls, has also produced resources to support change processes, in particular, How to Change the Story provides tips and tools for anyone working to promote safe equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive cultures.

Another possibly untapped area of potential in community clubs may be the many members with skills in management, budgeting, education, social change or one of the many others with skills that can contribute to introducing positive change. One way to establish what strengths are potentially available might be to audit the membership to find out not only what individuals can offer, but also when they might be available.

**4. Values Statement: Putting Plans into Action**

To ensure our sport is equal, safe, inclusive, and welcoming we put plans into practice at every level.

**Principle 4.1: Keep it Simple**

Respect is a fundamental part of being a good sport, although sometimes that idea might get lost. In many ways working towards making your sport or recreation centre equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive for everyone is about reclaiming the very values that sport was built on. The key message from the round table experts is ‘keep it simple’.

Some of the key actions that can be taken include at the National, league, association and State levels, taking a strong, public stand on the importance of your sport being for everyone, and standing for equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments at all levels. Develop polices, and codes of conduct and live by them. Also develop model codes and policies for use in regional associations, leagues and member clubs. This creates an authorising environment for local change.

At the regional level, adopt and promote and live by the values and principles identified in this document. Work with sports to support them to adopt and implement the model codes of conduct and principles of their sport, and to ensure their clubs are equal, safe, welcoming, and inclusive. Work with recreation facilities to understand that sexist environments do not belong in any recreation venue, and to practice the guidelines of the local government or governing bodies under which they operate.
At the club level this means implementing the policies and codes of conduct for their sport, and communicate with members and spectators about the sport’s expectations of them to behave respectfully and not use sexist language or behaviour. Have clear processes for dealing with infringements, and do not hesitate to use them when there is a breach. This might initially involve a quiet conversation drawing attention to the rules, and if further breaches occur, following through with more serious consequences. Encourage your teams’ leadership groups to act as role models for equal and inclusive behaviours (as is done in many elite sports). The rules and codes of conduct must apply to everyone in the club, regardless of their status, their capacity to contribute to a victory or anything else.

**Equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive recreation facilities.** In Victoria, the YMCA manages many local government recreation facilities. As part of its workplace change program Y Respect Gender, it worked with some of these facilities to focus on change. Staff in one centre noticed that the posters on display were quite sexist, portraying women as keeping fit for beauty and men for strength and fitness. They established that the posters were supplied by a commercial company and made contact with the company to explain that they would no longer use them. The posters were replaced with others that communicated more equal messages about fitness being for health and wellbeing.

**Principle 4.2: Communicate widely**

So, you have prepared the way, got your plans in place and convinced leaders and members to get on board with a process of positive change, building on strengths and developing the skills needed to make the plans work. It is essential to bring everyone along with you on the journey. As mentioned above under approaches to primary prevention, communication is an important strategy. Use your business case to let members and spectators know what is going to happen and why, and communicate about the authorising environment in which the changes are being implemented. Communicate about codes of conduct and policies, and about what will happen if there are breaches. Use plain language, and clear messaging. In recreation facilities, ensure that commercially produced posters and displays are in line with your message that the venue is safe, welcoming, and inclusive for all members and users.

**Communicating about change.** A few years ago, the elite St Kilda Football Club took a stand when it decided to implement policies to eliminate homophobia, which had been a feature of sledging in football for many years, and used by some spectators to abuse players. However, in line with AFL policy, St Kilda made the decision to make their club more welcoming for everyone. To do this, communication was the central strategy. And they decided to make contact with existing members first through their web site. They were clear that the changes would happen and that there would be a Pride Game in 2016. A few members were vehemently opposed to the inclusion of LGBTIQ people, however, the vast majority were supportive of the changes. The club communicated with individuals who were opposed, and made every effort to explain the reason for the changes. They also made it clear that if a member was so unhappy with the decision, they were welcome to leave the club. As a result of this strategy and the publicity that accompanied the Pride Game, St Kilda gained many more new members than the few who decided to terminate their membership as a result of the new policy.

National and State sport and recreation bodies can support change at the community level by:

- Taking a public stand to prevent violence against women and by developing and communicating policies, codes of conduct and resources for use by clubs and at facilities;
- Developing resources such as posters and other materials that help clubs and facilities communicate with members and spectators (but remember, keep it simple and build on other community resources that are already available); and
- Keeping communications clear and easy to understand and implement; use plain language.

Regional sports assemblies can draw on developments by national and state sport and recreation organisations by:

- Providing support and assistance to community clubs, associations, leagues and venues to implement the developments by their leadership;
- Promoting an authorising environment for change at the community level; and
- Linking community clubs and venues with other sports, or areas to facilitate learning and partnerships.
Approaches to Primary Prevention: at the start of this resource the five approaches to primary prevention are explained. Good practice suggests that a comprehensive approach that includes all or most of these change strategies is important. An annual event is not a waste of time, but it has limited long-term impact. The values and principles outlined in this resource can result in a comprehensive approach.

- It suggests simple ways to undertake policy, facility and guideline reform; it also suggests that simple, clear communication is essential.

- It suggests organisation development by becoming a learning organisation, establishing a business case, stressing the importance of planning and evaluation and skills development.

- It stresses the importance of community collaboration through partnerships with others working on promoting equal, safe, inclusive and welcoming environments.

Working towards creating equal, safe, inclusive sports will result in direct participation and community mobilisation. As more people get involved and see the value of gender equality and respectful relationships to their social lives and their sport, the more they will pass this on to others and do their bit to bring about change in their families and social circles.

Some sports might develop more complex programs, and funding for such programs is likely to become available, however, remember to keep it simple, plan carefully, evaluate thoroughly and focus on changing cultures that tolerate gender inequality, rigid gender stereotypes, sexism and misogyny.

**Sport and Gender Equality** For too long sport has been seen as being mainly for men, but recently women and girls have made inroads into sport in ways that are really starting to change this idea. The AFL elite Women’s competition has built on over a decade of youth girls’ football, and is one example of this.

“Investment and recognition of women’s sport is significant not just at the elite level but at all levels. Presentation and representation of females engaging in sports in local communities sends powerful messages about the rights of women to be present and represented in community sporting spaces... Seeing, supporting and representing women in grassroots sports is much more than just a game [5].

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