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Analucia Tello
Sofia Velasco

Renata Venzor

Dear Delegates,

First of all, welcome to the Commission on the Status of Women on NHSMUN 2025, an area in which you can debate inequalities and defend women's rights. Regarding my experience, I have participated in national MUN programs several times. I have also attended NHSMUN 2021 as a delegate for UNCTAD. What I value the most about NHSMUN is that you can grow professionally by finding solutions to today's problems, but also personally. For this reason, I encourage you to take this experience to grow and develop your skills.

Now's a great time to introduce myself! I am Vittoria Tomassetti, your CSW Assistant Director for Session I. I am thrilled to be a part of the NHSMUN 2025 staff and lead you into the wonderful experience that is the CSW. I am a 17-year-old girl who was born in Caracas, Venezuela. I have family roots across much of Italy, mainly because of my grandparents. I graduated from the Instituto Andes de Caracas in 2024. I plan on studying Medicine at the Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV). I aspire to become a trauma surgeon, so make sure to count on me for a reliable doctor in the future! My hobbies include staying active through sports and physical activities, cooking, reading, organizing, and exploring new restaurants and unique culinary experiences.

You may be wondering about how my interests may link to international politics, global news, and NHSMUN. I truly believe we need to seek to develop skills in different areas. Therefore, topics such as digital literacy or gender inequality in sports may not be of our first interest, but it does not mean that these are less important problems in people's lives or even non-existent worldwide. As your Assistant Director, I hope I can motivate you to always put your one hundred percent effort into solving problems. Take into consideration that you may not experience these types of problems, but other people, surroundings, and countries may be dealing with them. That said, the choice is yours: become the change you wish to see and take action in shaping a better world.

I am looking forward to meeting incredible and hardworking people. I am sure you will present innovative solutions to us. Without further ado, I cannot wait to meet you all at the Conference! Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Have fun!

Vittoria Tomassetti

The Commission on the Status of Women

Session I

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Renata Venzor

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Commission on the Status of Women! My name is Lauren Schwach, and I will be your Assistant Director for Session II! While this is my first year on staff, I am certainly no stranger to all things NHSMUN! I attended NHSMUN as a delegate for my last three years of high school after being in my school's Model UN club as a research assistant during my freshman year. I represented Guyana in ECLAC, Nepal in UNHRC and Guatemala in UNESCO. I loved fighting for the rights of citizens in those countries and doing research about their specific issues, so I am looking forward to watching you all do the same! I have incredible memories from NHSMUN, specifically from making amazing friendships and learning about really important issues around the world. I hope to foster that same experience for all of you, whether you are a returning or brand-new delegate!

I was born and raised in Rockaway Beach, New York which is a small neighborhood on the beach in Queens about an hour outside of Manhattan. I am currently a freshman at Stony Brook University in Long Island, New York, where I am studying psychology with a concentration in writing. I am extremely passionate about mental health, and I hope to become a clinical psychologist. Outside of class, I enjoy reading, playing the ukulele, and anything crafty I can get my hands on. Recently, I have been super into crocheting and paint-by-number kits. I also participate in my school's theater group, where I both perform and work behind the scenes. This semester, I will be stage-managing a murder mystery play!

The topics chosen for discussion in CSW at this conference are "Female Education and Literacy in the Digital World" and "Gender Equality in Sports." Both topics are highly relevant and spark new developments every day. This is why Vittoria, my fellow CSW AD, and I, have brought you an Update Paper with the newest developments on both topics. We hope they encourage you to keep researching and thinking of the most innovative possible solutions for the issues at hand.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the conference!

Best,

Lauren Schwach

The Commission on the Status of Women

Session II

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CSW

NHSMUN 2025



TOPIC A:

FEMALE EDUCATION AND LITERACY IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Photo Credit: Mahmud Imran

Introduction

Women around the world continue to face many challenges in developing digital literacy skills. This urgent issue must be addressed. The rapid growth of technology needs an equally rapid response to the issue of weak digital literacy skills. Due to the developments in technology, millions of women and girls around the world may never learn how to use these technologies. Yet, digital literacy skills are essential in today's world. For instance, digital literacy is a necessary skill to be successful in most jobs. For women and girls to be independent, they need financial security. The first step towards economic stability and success is being hired for a job.¹ Hence, it's clear why women and girls fall victim to the gender gap. This is especially a problem in places where inequality is severe.

Moreover, globally women have less access to technological devices. Women are less likely to have access to a smartphone than men.² As more people buy smartphones around the world, it has become a fundamental tool for communication. This is key for women to achieve independence. Additionally, delegates have to consider the rapid technological changes and with them the changing norms when creating solutions. Therefore, it is essential to stay informed about recent advancements to design more effective strategies. With this, we can create the most well-rounded solutions to this issue.

This paper aims to provide delegates with some recent advancements in efforts towards bridging the gender gap in digital literacy. Several countries do not have the resources to provide all of their citizens with access to technology. The tools needed to become digitally literate are considered a luxury and are not easily accessible. This is why collaboration is essential when drafting solutions. Delegates must figure out how to recreate strategies in various places. Women are being left behind and face more challenges than men in fighting for digital literacy. The UN General Assembly declared access to the internet as a basic human right in 2016.³ Therefore, CSW delegates must solve this issue. Delegates must not let any more women fall through the cracks of the digital age.

Digital Public Goods and Infrastructure

Digital public goods (DPGs) refer to any type of digital technologies or content. These often include apps or data visualization tools.⁴ Examples of DPGs are payment platforms like Venmo or Zelle. DPGs are free and accessible, with rare and minimal restrictions on their use and distribution.⁵ However, access to digital public goods remains a challenge. For instance, gender discrimination and lack of internet access are significant obstacles to the use of DPGs. More recently, due to the growth of digital media, censorship has become a more prominent challenge. Popular search engines, such as Google, have been found to grow the gap in digital literacy. They were found to give users varied search results depending on location. In a study published by *Convergence*, countries with more restrictions on human rights and higher poverty rates provide less enlightening results on a given topic.⁶ This is a concerning example of censorship based on socioeconomic status. Those living in poverty are already at a disadvantage when it comes to digital literacy. This study exposes even more challenges.

Allowing digital tools to be free and accessible is an important step towards gender equality in digital literacy. The Digital

1 "Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment," UN Women, accessed January 9, 2025, www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures.

2 GilPress, "How Many People Own Smartphones? (2024-2029)," *What's the Big Data?*, January 31, 2024, whatsthebigdata.com/smartphone-stats/.

3 Saunders and Scanlon, "The Digital Divide Is a Human Rights Issue: Advancing Social Inclusion Through Social Work Advocacy," *J Hum Rights Soc Work*, no. 6 vol. 2(2021):130-143, doi: 10.1007/s41134-020-00147-9.

4 "Frequently Asked Questions," Digital Public Goods Alliance, accessed December 21, 2024, <https://www.digitalpublicgoods.net/frequently-asked-questions>.

5 Digital Public Goods Alliance, "Frequently Asked Questions."

6 Gerret von Nordheim Tina Bettels-Schwabbauer, Katharina Kleinen-von Königslöw, Paulina Barczyszyn-Madziarz, Halyna Budivska, Philip Di Salvo Filip Dingerkus, Liziane Soares Guazinap, Kwaku Krobea Asante, Michał Kuś, Sandra Lábová, Antonia Matei, Norbert Merkovity, Fernando Oliveira Paulino, László Petrovski-Oláh, Michael Yao Wodui Serwornool Jonas Valente, Alexandra Wake, and Viktória Zakinszky Toma, "The different worlds of Google – A comparison of search results on conspiracy theories in 12 countries," *Convergence*, no.30 vol.6 (2024): 2267-2286, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565231203102>.

Public Goods Alliance (DPGA) highlights the need for reliable internet connectivity when using DPGs. This is supported by The UN Secretary General’s High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. They call upon the DPGA to work closely with other digital literacy projects to prioritize internet connectivity in schools.⁷ The United States Agency for International Development signed the Charter for Digital Public Goods on April 27, 2023.⁸ The charter collaborates with 67 organizations across 30 countries. It calls for open public and private spaces on the internet. Two major goals of the charter are empowerment and governance. This means that they are aiming to focus on inclusivity. This is a crucial step when it comes to bridging the gender gap in digital literacy. Efforts towards utilizing DPGs globally are the newest and possibly most effective strategy for solving the issue.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is a broader form of DPGs. It is defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a combination of streamlined technology built for

the public and the use of a public trading market.⁹ In short, DPI refers to the accessible technology systems and initiatives implemented by a government or organization, for example, digital forms of ID.¹⁰ DPGs are essentially the building blocks of larger-scale DPI. Therefore, understanding DPI is extremely relevant to the broad discussion of the issue of digital literacy.

There are several possible benefits and risks associated with Digital Public Infrastructure.¹¹ One successful example of DPI is the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) in India. UPI is a program that combines several bank accounts into one platform. This lets users have seamless account transfers and transactions.¹² The UPI allows users to safely carry out transactions using 2-factor authentication. It also allows for scheduled payments to help people pay their bills on time. Additionally, this project has made digital payment fees less expensive.¹³ There is also the World Summit on the Information Society, a two-phase UN summit. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration in using DPI. To accomplish

7 Digital Public Goods Alliance, “Frequently Asked Questions.”

8 United States Agency for International Development, “USAID Endorses the Charter for Digital Public Goods,” news release, April 27, 2023, <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/apr-27-2023-usaid-endorses-charter-digital-public-goods>.

9 “Digital Public Infrastructure,” United Nations Development Programme, accessed December 28, 2024, <https://www.undp.org/digital/digital-public-infrastructure>.

10 “GovStack Definitions: Understanding the Relationship between Digital Public Infrastructure, Building Blocks & Digital Public Goods,” Digital Public Goods Alliance, accessed December 28, 2024, <https://www.digitalpublicgoods.net/DPI-DPG-BB-Definitions.pdf>.

11 “Navigating the risks of Digital Public Infrastructure,” *The Gulf Times*, December 23, 2024, <https://www.gulf-times.com/article/697280/opinion/navigating-the-risks-of-digital-public-infrastructure>.

12 “Unified Payments Interface,” National Payments Corporation of India, accessed December 28, 2024, <https://www.npci.org.in/what-we-do/upi/product-overview>.

13 National Payments Corporation of India, “Unified Payments Interface,”

Adult women and young children working together to learn on a computer

Credit: Girish.h



this, the UN established a framework for countries to collaborate on digital development.¹⁴

While the use of Digital Public Infrastructure is an important step in the right direction, there are possible risks that must be considered. The Gulf Times discusses the possibility of governments using DPI for surveillance of its citizens through its digital systems.¹⁵ This possibility must be taken into account. Governments with wide gender gaps may try to control and surveil DPI. This could further limit female access to technology. Fortunately, the UN adopted the Universal DPI Safeguards Framework in September of 2024. It aims to lessen the possible risks associated with DPI.¹⁶ Creating these frameworks that protect vulnerable citizens is very important. Women and girls must be able to benefit from innovative concepts like DPI rather than be harmed.

A recent report from UNICEF shows how Digital Public Goods are being used to bridge the gap in digital literacy in Kazakhstan.¹⁷ The project emphasizes empowering young girls. Girls in Kazakhstan are learning to be part of the future of technology through the use of DPGs. The goal of UNICEF Kazakhstan is to equip girls with skills in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics).¹⁸ This is being achieved through several innovative projects. One is the Game Changers Coalition, a “partnership call-out to the gaming industry and beyond.”¹⁹ This project encourages girls to be part of the future of gaming. The Game Changers Coalition is particularly valuable. It uses fun activities such as video games to teach girls skills like coding and teamwork. It has been recreated in India, South Africa, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Cambodia.²⁰ This is highly encouraging for the future of implementing innovative solutions to bridge the

digital literacy gap around the world. In addition to gaming technology, girls are also learning about data, AI, and coding through an interactive DPG simulator that is available online to all. UNICEF is emphasizing collaboration throughout these activities rather than making it competitive. This is incredibly important.

On another hand, to ensure that these systems keep including women is important to have women at the decision-making table. For example, under the leadership of many successful women, the African Union’s agenda for 2030 includes The Women and Youth Financial & Economic Inclusion Initiative (WYFEI). The WYFEI initiative aims to unlock USD 100 billion by 2030.²¹ It will create economic opportunities for 10 million women and girls in Africa.²² The project includes promoting digital financial inclusion through DPI. The WYFEI works with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to boost women’s economic power by supporting small businesses led by young women. AfCFTA provides small businesses with digital IDs. The ID allows them to do international movements and save small businesses from doing government paperwork.²³ Formalizing cross-border transactions would not only help women boost their enterprises but also help Africa’s economy. Around 70 percent of informal cross-border traders are women with small businesses.²⁴

Closing the gender gap in digital literacy is a team effort. It is not something that can be achieved by any one organization or country alone. Implementing DPGs and DPIs around the globe in the same way they have been in Kazakhstan is very important to think about when drafting solutions. Technology is not going anywhere. It is crucial for women because it helps close gender gaps and empowers them in many areas

14 “Navigating the risks of Digital Public Infrastructure,” *The Gulf Times*.

15 “Navigating the risks of Digital Public Infrastructure,” *The Gulf Times*.

16 United Nations Development Programme, “UN Releases Universal DPI Safeguards Framework to Promote Safe and Inclusive Digital Public Infrastructure,” news release, September 24, 2024, <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/un-releases-universal-dpi-safeguards-framework-promote-safe-and-inclusive-digital-public-infrastructure>.

17 “Bridging the Gender Gap with Digital Public Goods,” UNICEF Kazakhstan, accessed December 21, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/stories/bridging-gender-gap-digital-public-goods>.

18 UNICEF Kazakhstan, “Bridging the Gender Gap with Digital Public Goods.”

19 “The Game Changers Coalition,” UNICEF, accessed December 21, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/gender-equality/game-changers-coalition>.

20 UNICEF, “The Game Changers Coalition.”

21 Monique Nsanabaganwa, “Unlocking women’s economic power through digital public infrastructure,” Gates Foundation, September 25, 2024, <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/ideas/articles/women-digital-public-infrastructure>.

22 Nsanabaganwa, “Unlocking women’s economic power through digital public infrastructure.”

23 Nsanabaganwa, “Unlocking women’s economic power through digital public infrastructure.”

24 Nsanabaganwa, “Unlocking women’s economic power through digital public infrastructure.”

of life: education, financial independence, representation, etc. Solutions using DPGs and DPI should fix, not copy, the gender inequalities found in physical infrastructure. Therefore, ensuring that women and girls have the opportunity as equals going forward is extremely important.

Case Study: Female Digital Literacy in India

India has a current population of 1.4 billion people. Yet, one in four people in the country remain below literacy levels.²⁵ This problem especially affects women. Only 69 percent of women are literate compared to 83.45 percent of men in India.²⁶ India has improved these rates aiming to meet the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. By the beginning of the century, the gap was even bigger, with only 47.84 percent literate women against 73.41 percent men.²⁷ India's literacy rate is low in comparison to other countries in the region, such as Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.²⁸ The gap in literacy can be attributed to many factors. For example, many parents do not allow their female children to go to school. Also, many women get married at a young age and do not finish school. Additionally, many cultural beliefs still support a stereotype that men are smarter and hence they get all the privileges and better education.²⁹ This only furthers the literacy gap between genders.

This gap also translates to digital literacy, since women still face more challenges to access and use information and

communication technologies. Digital literacy is low for both men and women. Only 22 percent of all men and 21 percent of all women have some form of digital literacy.³⁰ Only 60 percent of women have mobile internet awareness and only 30 percent know how to use the internet to find necessary information, operate mobile money, or access apps and e-services.³¹ Neetu Kakoti, a Social Worker for Women Empowerment, describes digital literacy for women as a fundamental need to be an equal member of society.³² She says the gap is caused by social gender rules, economic limits, and a general lack of opportunity.

Moreover, the gender gap also increases depending on certain factors. For example, the gender gap is larger for single women than married women in India.³³ Additionally, it can vary based on India's notable socioeconomic and geographical factors. These factors put citizens in a unique position in the fight for equal access to digital literacy. People living in rural areas face different opportunities than those from urban areas. Adults living in rural areas have been observed to be less likely to have access to technology due to the nature of their surroundings.³⁴ Only 24 percent of rural households have internet access, compared to 66 percent in cities.³⁵ The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report states that digital literacy in rural areas has increased over the last two years despite the divide between rural and urban areas.³⁶

A recent case study published by the CSR Journal on December 2, 2024, discusses India's digital literacy strategy.³⁷

25 Suzana Košir and Radhika Lakshminarayanan, "Female Literacy and Crime against Women in India: Complex Trajectories and Correlations," *International Social Science Journal*, December 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12550>.

26 "India: Literacy rate from 1981 to 2022, by gender," Statista, accessed January 27, 2025, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/271335/literacy-rate-in-india/>.

27 Statista, "India: Literacy rate from 1981 to 2022, by gender."

28 "Literacy Rate by Country 2024," World Population Review, accessed January, 2025, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/literacy-rate-by-country>.

29 Dinesha P. T., "Status of Female Literacy Rate in India: An Overview," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (September 1, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3030601>

30 Cledwyn Fernandez and Havishaye Puri, "The gender gap in digital literacy is significant, but there are glimmers of hope," Economic Policies for Women-led Development, 2024, <https://icrier.org/epwd/blog/digital/the-gender-gap-in-digital-literacy-is-significant-but-there-are-glimmers-of-hope>.

31 Isha Gupta, "Digital gender divide amidst India's service-led growth," *Ideas for India*, October 7, 2024, <https://www.ideasforindia.in/topics/social-identity/digital-gender-divide-amidst-india-s-service-led-growth.html>.

32 Bhattacharya, "Digital literacy in India."

33 Cledwyn Fernandez and Havishaye Puri, "The gender gap in digital literacy is significant, but there are glimmers of hope."

34 Fu, et. al, "How Does Digitalization Affect the Urban-Rural Disparity at Different Disparity Levels: A Bayesian Quantile Regression Approach," *Technology in Society*, vol. 78, no. 102633 (September 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2024.102633>.

35 "Bridging the Digital Divide: Empowering Rural India," NIT Foundation, June 12, 2024, <https://niitfoundation.org/bridging-the-digital-divide-empowering-rural-india/>.

36 Bhattacharya, "Digital literacy in India."

37 Ahana Bhattacharya, "Digital literacy in India, a pressing priority," *The CSR Journal*, December 2, 2024, <https://theCSRjournal.in/world-computer-literacy-day-digital-literacy-india/>.

Ahana Bhattacharya emphasizes India's ability to keep the gender gap in digital literacy small despite challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. They saw the COVID-19 lockdown as an opportunity to learn digital literacy skills. One of these skills was online ordering as a way to receive food and medicine while maintaining social distancing policies. During COVID-19, there was a need for remote learning to keep children on track with their education. There was a switch to virtual learning that caused a need for digital literacy in education. Digital literacy was being made a priority. However, students still suffer from a lack of access to reliable internet and physical technology.

Additionally, Indian women have risen to the occasion. They have embraced digital technology. A rather empowering example of this is the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). SEWA is a trade union for independently employed women in India. The association was founded in 1972, and since then it has grown into a highly successful organization. They have 1.7 million women as members across 18 Indian states. Women's work of selling handmade woven goods in person was threatened due to COVID. As a result, women used digital literacy training from SEWA to sell their goods online.³⁸ Women were able to continue making money through digital payment platforms, such as Google Pay. This example marks a significant closing of the gender gap due to focused digital literacy plans.

Programs like SEWA are essential in continuing to bridge the gap in India. The Indian government is specifically focusing on the most underprivileged areas of the country when drafting solutions.³⁹ They launched two significant programs: The National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) and the Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA). The program aimed to train 5.25 million people. At the end of those two programs,

a little over 5.3 million people were trained, 42 percent being from rural parts of India.⁴⁰ This surpasses the initial goal by around 100,000 people. Their efforts align with Sustainable Development Goal 4.6 under the United Nations. The goal is to ensure that youth and adults, both men and women, achieve literacy by 2030.⁴¹

Other NGOs, like Sajhe Sapne, offer centers in marginalized rural communities to empower women in STEM programs. For example, the Sapna Center trains and teaches women basic math, code, and design tools in a yearlong boarding school program.⁴² After completing the program the Sapna Center helps their participants to find jobs in the technology sector. Since the initiative began in 2020, 90 women have graduated. The success of learning in their students is due to their personalized education since they first reinforce basic education since education standards across rural India are uneven.⁴³ Sapna Center has not only helped women learn digital tools like LinkedIn and Microsoft but also solved their villages' problems with technology. For example, the student Anjani Kumar from Baghmara village used Google Sheets to log irrigation services and manage payments for their farm.⁴⁴ Al Jazeera reported that even if international organizations offer opportunities, social expectations as young girls stop them.⁴⁵ India has the highest number of women married or in an arranged union before the age of 18 in the world with 222,400,000 girls.⁴⁶ Most of these women never go to college or university after marriage or have a harder time accessing education.

In addition to the two main government initiatives, computer literacy programs are being launched in schools. These programs would teach computer software such as Microsoft Word and Excel. It would also touch on other mail and social media platforms.⁴⁷ Proficiency in these types of programs

38 "FROM THE FIELD: The Indian women weaving a digital web," *UN News*, February 21, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/02/1084992>.

39 Bhattacharya, "Digital literacy in India."

40 Bhattacharya, "Digital literacy in India."

41 "4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy," Sustainable Development Solutions Network, accessed December 28, 2024, <https://indicators.report/targets/4-6/>.

42 Rishabh Jain, "A tech revolution in rural India: Training poor women in STEM," *Al Jazeera*, August 31, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2024/8/31/a-tech-revolution-in-rural-india-training-poor-women-in-stem>.

43 Jain, "A tech revolution in rural India: Training poor women in STEM."

44 Jain, "A tech revolution in rural India: Training poor women in STEM."

45 Jain, "A tech revolution in rural India: Training poor women in STEM."

46 "India," *Girls not Brides*, accessed January, 2025, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/atlas/india/>.

47 Bhattacharya, "Digital literacy in India."



Girls learning about digital literacy in a classroom in India

Credit: Fotokannan

enhances a student's education and is helpful in the job search.

Another notable effort to bridge the gender gap in digital literacy in India is the Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF). WiDEF is a joint initiative between USAID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Reliance Foundation.⁴⁸ The fund aims to accelerate digital inclusion for women across India. WiDEF has provided grants up to USD 500,000 on eliminating common barriers for women to access and use.⁴⁹ These barriers include affordability of tools and products, digital skills, and safety.

Major companies in India are also donating funds to help grow the amount of digitally literate students. These funds go to projects such as building computer labs in schools. These labs would allow students to practice their digital literacy skills in a safe and familiar environment. Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages(HCCB) is an Indian sub-company of The Coca-Cola Company. HCCB paid to provide digital literacy training to over 2,000 women in five rural villages. The case study talks about how HCCB hopes to support women in finding their financial independence, taking advantage of digital literacy.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ "Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF) Launches New Round of Funding to Accelerate Digital Inclusion for Women in India," GSMA, accessed January 20, 2025, <https://www.gsma.com/newsroom/press-release/women-in-the-digital-economy-fund-widdef-launches-new-round-of-funding-to-accelerate-digital-inclusion-for-women-in-india/>.

⁴⁹ GSMA, "Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF) Launches New Round of Funding to Accelerate Digital Inclusion for Women in India."

⁵⁰ Bhattacharya, "Digital literacy in India."

⁵¹ Bhattacharya, "Digital literacy in India."

Lastly, the case study says that platforms like WhatsApp are very important. This is because they are designed to work well in many countries. Siddiqui emphasizes the importance of multilingual learning material. He says that it makes for the most relevant and relatable content and ensures that we are "leaving no child behind."⁵¹

The efforts of the organizations discussed in the case study are a very good place to start when brainstorming solutions for closing the gender gap in digital literacy. We can observe that many approaches work for solving the problem. Social intervention and direct digital literacy training are two examples. This shows that closing the gender gap is very possible. We must make it a top priority around the world.

Conclusion

Every day more and more women lose out on access to digital literacy. However, there are also more and more organizations that are launching projects to bridge the gap. Digital literacy is not a desired skill, it is a required one. Becoming digitally

literate will equip the next generation of women and girls with the tools they need to be successful in the workforce. It will also promote solidarity among women and girls, showing the importance of working together for progress. Due to the importance of digital literacy skills, many countries have implemented different projects to promote digital literacy for women. Successful initiatives in India, DPG projects in Kazakhstan, and the DPI initiatives show the importance of collaboration. Collaboration is necessary to close the digital literacy gender gap. Additionally, they show how possible it is to bridge the gap if women and girls are given the funds, resources, and support that they need.

Implementing and revisiting solutions that have worked in the past is key when drafting new solutions. The delegates of CSW must work together to analyze past solutions and figure out inclusive and innovative ways to use them around the world. Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 are quality education and gender equality. These goals must be kept in mind when drafting solutions.⁵² SDGs are the driving framework of CSW and all bodies of the UN, therefore they need to remain the top priority.

Digital literacy must be accessible to all, regardless of gender or socioeconomic status. It is a right that has been stripped of women and girls, especially in states that are already struggling due to poverty or conflict. To achieve this, global efforts must focus on reducing barriers women often face to accessing technology and learning the skills necessary to use the internet. Delegates need to understand the importance of working together to scale up programs that aim to reduce the gender gap. These programs empower women, helping them gain financial independence and critical skills. We must address this issue as soon as possible. Delegates need to find solutions to ensure access to digital literacy for the women around the world who are most vulnerable to the gender gap.

52 “The 17 Goals,” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed December 21, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.



CSW

NHSMUN 2025



TOPIC B: GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORTS

Photo Credit: Marie-Lan Nguyen

Introduction

The world of sports, once dominated by men, is increasingly embracing women's participation and leadership. Women have made their way in sports as participants and in leadership positions. As a result, female athletes demand not only equality on the field and in the boardroom but also in the eyes of the world. This is why female athletes are changing the narrative through great achievements in sports. They are also proving people wrong about outdated beliefs. Yet, the battle for gender equality in sports goes on.

Gender equality is an important factor in the evolution of sports. States are working to create equal and inclusive opportunities for all athletes. Nonetheless, there are several problems present in many sports. Examples include unequal access to payment and facilities, sexual harassment, and unequal media coverage. We must keep encouraging improvements to help males and females with their performance objectives. The international community should move to create a sustainable and fair sports environment, especially for women. This can begin by bringing down the systematic barriers and uplifting women in sports worldwide.

Equality in sports starts by acknowledging women's achievements. In this manner, an elite female athlete's representation in any sport can be witnessed and valued. A notable difference was seen in the Olympic Games Paris 2024, which was reported as the most gender-equal in history.¹ Female athletes, but also coaches' participation, were addressed on the Women in Sport High-Performance Pathway (WISH).² Moreover, the amount of female and male athlete participants in this year's Olympic Games was equal in number by each side. This was perceived as a big step to encourage the equal participation of males and females in sports, especially at larger athletic events with massive media coverage.³

Physiological Differences

Men and women have undeniable physical differences despite the overall general functions they have in common.⁴ These physiological differences arise from variations in anatomy, hormones, and muscle composition, among other factors. Said differences influence critical factors such as a person's strength, power, speed, and aerobic endurance. Hence, biological sex directly impacts athletic human performance.⁵ The impact of the physical differences becomes especially clear in competitive sports, where men and women show noticeable differences in performance. In events that require strength, power, speed, or endurance, males typically outperform females. Recognizing these differences helps us understand how biology shapes athletic ability and performance.

For instance, males and females produce specific types and different quantities of hormones.⁶ Hormones are chemical messengers produced by endocrine glands that regulate the body's function through metabolism. Therefore, these metabolic processes can impact the energy levels that influence the outcome capability in sports.⁷ Resting metabolic rate (RMR) refers to the amount of energy used only to realize the body's internal function.⁸ Thus, RMR plays an important role in every athlete's outcome capacity since it takes 40 percent to 60 percent of the daily energy body needs and usage. According to the "Differences in Body Fat in Athletes Categorized by

1 "Empowering Women in Coaching: Success Stories From Paris 2024," *Olympics*, August 10, 2024, <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/empowering-women-in-coaching-success-stories-from-paris-2024>

2 Olympics, "Empowering Women in Coaching: Success Stories From Paris 2024."

3 Olympics, "Empowering Women in Coaching: Success Stories From Paris 2024."

4 Rebecca Baumgartner, "We've Never Really Studied the Female Body - 3 Quarks Daily," *3 Quarks Daily* (blog), October 17, 2024, <https://3quarksdaily.com/3quarksdaily/2024/10/weve-never-really-studied-the-female-body.html>

5 Michael J. Joyner, Sandra K. Hunter, and Jonathon W. Senefeld, "Evidence on Sex Differences in Sports Performance," *Journal of Applied Physiology*, December 24, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1152/jappphysiol.00615.2024>

6 Jonathon W. Senefeld and Sandra K. Hunter, "Hormonal Basis of Biological Sex Differences in Human Athletic Performance," *Endocrinology* 165, no. 5 (March 29, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1210/endo/bqae036>

7 Joyner et al., "Evidence on Sex Differences in Sports Performance."

8 Fields, Jennifer B., Andrew T. Askow, Margaret T. Jones, and Andrew R. Jagim, "Differences in Body Fat in Athletes Categorized by Resting Metabolic Rate," *Applied Sciences* 14, no. 2: (October 31, 2024): 9949, <https://doi.org/10.3390/app14219949>

Resting Metabolic Rate” study, athletes’ body composition and parameters can be classified depending on the different types of RMR since it is strongly associated with body mass.⁹ The results showed that the different metabolic activities may substantially affect the levels of body fat depending on body weight.¹⁰

Since RMR is determined by hormones, biological sex influences their production of them. Sex hormones are in charge of reproduction and sexual development.¹¹ That is why males and females also have notorious body appearances that can identify them. For example, the average male’s body weight composition is different from the female’s average body. The body composition is determined by the diverse types and quantities of hormone production that intervene in the metabolic processes properly of each sex.¹² Namely, testosterone is produced by both male and female bodies, but in different quantities. Males have more quantity of testosterone since it is their main sex hormone, while for females, estrogen and progesterone are the most important sex hormones. Importantly, the larger production of testosterone develops greater muscle mass and strength during physical activities.¹³

Consequently, males tend to outperform females in physical activities due to their body capacities.¹⁴ It is said that they are stronger because of greater muscle gain and body composure.¹⁵ Moreover, since men produce 15 times more testosterone

than women, it is strongly associated with physiological performance.¹⁶ As a result, males have an advantage in athletic activities due to muscle strength and power because of the size of muscle fibers.¹⁷ On that account, males can outperform women in physical activities by about 5-35 percent.¹⁸

As many limitations exist due to the body’s capacity and performance outcome, hormonal imbalances impact women differently.¹⁹ In the same aspect, only women have an average 28-day metabolic cycle determined by hormones that can alter the overall body function.²⁰ Medications to regulate a natural woman’s cycle, such as contraceptives, not only influence them at a physical level but also at a physiological level.²¹ In the physical aspect, uncomfortable bleeding, lower levels of energy, heartbeat rate accelerations, muscle pain, bloating, diarrhea, or constipation are just some examples of the average menstruation symptoms females can suffer from.²² Training with these symptoms is no easy task. In the physiological aspect, sensibility, moodiness, and even depression predisposition can influence the training effectiveness despite taking contraceptives. Therefore, athletic capacity, physical performance, and outcome can lower during the average four to seven days period of time.²³ For example, most of the United States gymnast female participants had their period during the Olympic Games 2024.²⁴ Feeling the cycle’s symptoms during one of the most demanding and stressful competitions is no easy task. Still, they found their way to a medal on the

9 Fields et al., “Differences in Body Fat in Athletes Categorized by Resting Metabolic Rate.”

10 Fields et al., “Differences in Body Fat in Athletes Categorized by Resting Metabolic Rate.”

11 Senefeld and Hunter, “Hormonal Basis of Biological Sex Differences in Human Athletic Performance.”

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13 Jamie Eske, and Mandy French, “What to Know About Female Sex Hormones,” *Medical News Today*, November 26, 2024, <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324887#puberty>

14 Sandra K. Hunter and Jonathon W. Senefeld, “Sex Differences in Human Performance,” *The Journal of Physiology* 602, no. 17 (August 6, 2024): 4129–56, <https://doi.org/10.1113/jp284198>

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16 “Are Higher Levels of Testosterone, Doping? - Yasin Patel and Caitlin Haberlin-Chambers - Church Court Chambers,” Church Court Chambers, November 20, 2024, <https://churchcourtchambers.co.uk/article/are-higher-levels-of-testosterone-doping-yasin-patel-and-caitlin-haberlin-chambers/>

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19 Fernandez Hospital, “How Hormonal Imbalance Impacts Women’s Health,” November 20, 2024, <https://blog.fernandezhospital.com/2024/11/20/how-hormonal-imbalance-impacts-womens-health/>

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23 Hannah Humphries, Gabrielle Marchelli, and Jennifer A. Bunn, “The Influence of Menstruation and Hormonal Birth Control on the Performance of Female Collegiate Lacrosse Players,” *Sports* 12, no. 11: (October 31, 2024): 297, <https://doi.org/10.3390/sports12110297>

24 Katie Camero, “What It’s Like Doing Olympic Gymnastics During Your Period,” *SELF*, August 1, 2024, <https://www.self.com/story/olympics-womens-gymnastics-periods>

podium.²⁵

In the same aspect, back in the London Olympics of 2012, a French gymnast called Youna Dufournet said that she had to deal with water retention during her period. As a consequence, she gained “at least four pounds.”²⁶ In the gymnastics world, this is a massive disadvantage. Furthermore, Li Meizehn, a 25-year-old Chinese female runner, demonstrated extraordinary courage and persistence while competing in a marathon in 2024. During the first half of the marathon, Li Meizehn started menstruating, and she kept running.²⁷ She said that if she had quit, she would’ve had to run another marathon to qualify for the national team.²⁸

This event was highlighted by the media, and reactions were very varied. While some people have expressed disgust due to the lack of sanitary protection for preventing blood spotting, others just admire the courage it takes to run with such physical pain. It is also important to evidence the development of the media coverage that highlights heroic acts by women in the

sports field. Li Meizehn not only demonstrated courage but also proved sexist beliefs wrong since women are often seen as weak and sensible. Professionals, coaches, and spectators must keep in mind how significant the female metabolic process is, especially during sports training and competitions.²⁹ For this reason, it is important to acknowledge and support these physically challenging processes that women often cope with rather than treating such situations with shame or disgust to normalize them.

On the other hand, becoming a mother transforms a woman’s athletic capability and energy levels.³⁰ This is a controversial theme since women have been portrayed as nurturing housewives. As a result, since the start of pregnancy, women often feel forced to dedicate their full time to the process, continuing this commitment until nearly a year after giving birth.³¹ Although, nowadays mothers have learned to overcome their pregnancies while remaining professional in their work environment and continuing their daily activities to the

25 Camero, “What It’s Like Doing Olympic Gymnastics During Your Period.”

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27 Ishika Thanvi, “Watch: China Runner Finishes in Style After Getting Her Period Mid-Marathon,” *SheThePeople*, October 21, 2024, <https://www.shethepeople.tv/shesport/chinese-woman-gets-her-period-in-marathon-li-meizhen-7342129>

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30 Natasha Chandra, “Exercise During Pregnancy: Staying Active Safely,” *Ultrasound Care*, October 17, 2024, <https://ultrasoundcare.com.au/exercise-during-pregnancy-staying-active-safely/>

31 Julie S. Moldenhauer, “Overview of Postpartum Care,” *MSD Manual Consumer Version*, August 7, 2024, <https://www.msmanuals.com/home/women-s-health-issues/postpartum-care/overview-of-postpartum-care>

Youna Dufournet
 Credit: TwoWings



best of their ability. The footballer Alex Morgan talks about the “mentally draining” balance she needs to reach between motherhood and soccer.³² She added, “I feel like I did what I needed for me (...) and kind of prioritizing my family first, which was a little different as well, because I prioritized soccer first up until then.”³³ There is a constant battle to balance their dreams while growing a family. For this reason, she calls out all female athletes to keep pushing. Since women can do both sports and family.³⁴

Moreover, the demanding physical condition of sports subjects the body to high levels of stress. So much stress can become a risk to a pregnancy, even leading to the loss of the fetus or baby. For this reason, it is recommended to seek a professional that can monitor the pregnancy to keep the mother’s and baby’s health.³⁵ This is especially important for professional athletes. Even though every mother has a different lifestyle and each pregnancy is different, athletes tend to face extreme levels of stress. As previously said, menstruation lowers energy levels and decreases the optimal capacity for physical activities. Pregnancy requires double the energy to keep the mother’s health and the creation of another human being inside her.³⁶ In this way, the promotion of pregnancy health is an important fact that can not be left aside.³⁷

Hence, due to biological differences, women face many biological natural obstacles that men do not. For example, menstruation can make exercising more difficult during certain periods. These obstacles can also prevent women from motherhood because of the risks for the baby and the impact on their bodies. The key to obtaining balance in a sport for living while maintaining personal dreams is very hard to find. This doesn’t necessarily mean menstruation or pregnancy are disadvantages, but they are natural processes that need to be

recognized.

Cultural Impact of Sports

Sports have become a worldwide unifier of cultures, traditions, and generations. Sports are a fundamental element in all cultures. Hence, it demonstrates a society’s values, identity, and even unity. Sports are also universal. They transcend one country as they bring together people from all over the world. This creates an opportunity for countries, communities, and individuals to come together in shared celebration.³⁸ This is especially relevant in today’s reality, where new developments in technology have increased global access to sports viewing. Namely, in the 2024 Olympic Games, 10,500 athletes from 206 territories came together to compete in 32 sports.³⁹ Additionally, the digital programming of the games allowed over 30 million people from all over the world to be able to watch the various competitions.⁴⁰

The global viewership and cultural impact of sports make it a fundamental aspect of social change. Due to their cultural relevance, sports can even influence social norms and values. According to the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, they are a key factor in promoting and strengthening universal respect and human rights.⁴¹ Sports can also be used to combat all forms of discrimination. This is particularly relevant to the topic of gender equality. The increasing visibility of women in sports has influenced the global view of gender norms. This has helped improve inclusivity and equality.

However, the cultural impact of sports is not always positive. The impact sports have on social norms and values can also be harmful. Sports can be used to promote harmful social

32 “Soccer Icon Alex Morgan Is Fighting for Future Mom Athletes: ‘It Was Really Mentally Draining,’” *TODAY*, December 17, 2024, <https://www.today.com/parents/alex-morgan-mom-athletes-rcna183009>

33 *TODAY*, “Soccer Icon Alex Morgan Is Fighting for Future Mom Athletes: ‘It Was Really Mentally Draining.’”

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35 “Promoting Healthy Pregnancy,” *World Health Organization*, November 18, 2024, <https://www.who.int/activities/promoting-healthy-pregnancy>

36 *World Health Organization*, “Promoting Healthy Pregnancy.”

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41 A/RES/79/325.



Caitlin Clark
Credit: MGoBlog

stereotypes.⁴² As a result, there is sexism present in sports. For example, these practices can result in the absence of role models for female athletes and an unequal share of caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, it can have practical consequences like limiting access to training facilities, infrastructure, and resources for women in sports.⁴³ Hence, the cultural impact of sports can even promote violence towards female athletes.

A clear example is the unequal pay between female and male athletes. Women are paid much less than men in sports.⁴⁴ Female athletes earn approximately 80 percent less than males. This number is more than three times the average pay gap.⁴⁵ This significant gap is a result of female sports being undervalued, leading to little to no advertisement for women's sports. This creates lower revenues, which causes unequal pay. For instance, the NBA draws in around USD 2.8 billion annually in media revenue, while the WNBA earns around USD 65 million.⁴⁶ This clear difference in revenues, which can be directly attributed to the cultural perception of sports,

creates a pay gap between the leagues.

Besides the overall payment, the distribution of salaries is also unjust. Payment for male and female athletes is not proportional to the revenue generated. For example, the compensation for first-draft picks for the WNBA and the NBA is not proportional. In 2024, Caitlin Clark and Victor Wembanyama were each league's first pick. Caitlin Clark received USD 76,535, while Victor Wembanyama received USD 12.2 million.⁴⁷ Yet, this difference cannot be attributed to the overall revenue of each league. Caitlin Clark's earnings represent 0.038 percent of what the WNBA generates, and Victor Wembanyama's earnings represent 0.122 percent of the NBA's worth. Hence, the women's salary is over three times less than the men's salary proportionally. Due to this drastic pay difference, female male athletes aren't asking for the same salaries but instead for an equitable shared revenue agreement.⁴⁸

Moreover, women in sports are more likely to face violence

⁴² United Nations, "UN Expert Calls for Equality and Stronger Protections for Women and Girls in Sports," OHCHR, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/10/un-expert-calls-equality-and-stronger-protections-women-and-girls-sports>.

⁴³ United Nations, "UN Expert Calls for Equality and Stronger Protections for Women and Girls in Sports."

⁴⁴ Dulcie Leimbach, "The Wide World of Violence against Females in Sports," PassBlue, October 8, 2024, <https://www.passblue.com/2024/10/08/the-wide-world-of-violence-against-females-in-sports/>.

⁴⁵ Luciana Restrepo, "The Rigged Game: Pay Gaps in Sports," The Stork, December 4, 2024, <https://www.iestork.org/the-rigged-game-pay-gaps-in-sports/>.

⁴⁶ Anna Brosnihan, "Trials and Triumphs: Pay Equality and Rising Popularity in the WNBA," SENSIS, September 26, 2024, <https://www.sensisagency.com/nexus/trials-and-triumphs-pay-equality-and-rising-popularity-wnba>.

⁴⁷ Restrepo, "The Rigged Game: Pay Gaps in Sports."

⁴⁸ Brosnihan, "Trials and Triumphs: Pay Equality and Rising Popularity in the WNBA."

and abusive behavior than men. Women are often body-shamed or even sexualized in sports. Many forms and types of abuse have been witnessed, especially by female athletes. Several professional women athletes have experienced sexual abuse as a child. Consequently, the enjoyability of sports due to mental and physical consequences has decreased and transformed the sport's main objective. For example, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reported 2023 online harassment from fans and social media platforms to their female athletes. In the study, there were more than 72,000 messages cataloged as abusive or harmful by Artificial Intelligence (AI), coming from over 1.3 million different posts. The majority of the total messages were about sexual content. This data portrays the influence of sexist and inappropriate behavior that can harm these female athletes' mental health. The insinuations and over-sexualized body image are a form of abuse that is largely socially accepted nowadays. Hence, this shows how culture can normalize certain views and values that can harm women.

Equally, societal and religious beliefs have a great impact on each region's lifestyle.⁴⁹ Notably, it has affected women's participation in sports. As a result, in some places, women and girls are excluded from playing sports based on their sex. This is the reality for women in Afghanistan since 2021, when the Taliban took over the country.⁵⁰ Many female athletes had to go into hiding and could not continue their training. Sanah, a 25-year-old Afghanistan woman, is often asked by the Taliban authorities why she jogs in the morning, "Why do you need to exercise, you don't have to, so don't."⁵¹ Luckily, she did not have to deal with the consequences but rather evaded the military by taking another route. Many women fled from their country to compete in the 2024 Olympics despite not being represented and authorized by their real state country.

For example, a three-female exile team competed in the Olympics. The group was formed by two sister cyclists,

Fatima and Yulduz Hashimi, and a sprinter, Kamba Yousufi. All three female athletes from Afghanistan live in exile. They competed under the former Afghanistan flag since "Taliban officials and the Taliban flag are banned from the Olympics because of human rights violations."⁵² It is important to stand out that this is not a normal action that must be taken just for a woman to practice a sport or even elevate their physical activity. Each country's government should guarantee equality despite religion and culture to conserve and develop their citizens' quality lifestyle.

Additionally, many women face discrimination due to their gender in sporting events. In the Olympic Games Paris 2024, many women were discriminated against due to their gender.⁵³ For instance, from Egypt, Nada Hafez was critiqued for competing seven months pregnant in fencing.⁵⁴ Secondly, from Algeria, the female boxer Imane Khelif was called a man because of her physical composure and was strongly bullied online.⁵⁵ Both discriminatory attitudes towards them are not acceptable.

Sports have the power to unite people across cultures. However, this unity is overshadowed by persistent gender inequality and discrimination in sports. Female athletes face unequal pay, fewer resources, and abuse. Discrimination limits their opportunities and harms their mental and physical health. These issues not only harm the athletes themselves but also reflect deeper societal problems. Delegates need to work together to ensure fair pay, safety, and equal opportunities. Cultural and religious barriers that exclude women from sports must be challenged. Sports should be for everyone. Action is needed to make them fair, safe, and inclusive for women worldwide.

49 United Nations, "Sport Bridges Cultures, Empowers People, Promotes Peace, Sustainable Development, General Assembly Speakers Declare, Adopting Resolution by Consensus | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases."

50 United Nations, "UN Expert Calls for Equality and Stronger Protections for Women and Girls in Sports."

51 "Barred From Sport, Afghan Women Seek Relief in Secretive Exercise," *Inside the Games*, September 15, 2024, <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1148654/barred-from-sport-afghan-women-seek>

52 Amcs-Webmaster, "Afghan female Olympians take the fight for women's rights to the 2024 Paris Games."

53 Mirna Sayed Abdulaal, "Arab Olympic Women Athletes Are Exposing Gender Bias in Sports," *Egyptian Streets*, August 9, 2024, <https://egyptianstreets.com/2024/08/03/arab-olympic-women-athletes-are-exposing-gender-bias-in-sports/>

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Conclusion

In conclusion, while significant advancements have been made in recent years, gender equality in sports remains an ongoing challenge. Despite male and female differences, the increased participation and visibility of female athletes have developed against several obstacles.

Therefore, there is a need for recognizing and respecting the natural female cycle and body capacity of creation.⁵⁶ Likewise, acknowledging the physical differences between males and females while biological factors affect their performance is crucial. Addressing discrimination, sexism, abuse, and harassment is necessary for female voices to be heard in this field. Furthermore, cultural norms and religions should not define a human's equality in any area. For this reason, it is unacceptable that several countries do not even permit women to have the opportunity to practice a sport. Worldwide, traditional gender stereotypes have determined a woman's past, present, and future. That is why challenging these harmful norms can create a unified and equal world among diversity. In this way, women empowerment can continue to seek a more just and suitable environment in sports, in which passion remains the main purpose.

Limits placed on women must stop. A call to action must be taken to obtain gender equality at its perfect balance. The international athletic community has settled on a new objective: not to win a medal but to win equality.

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