



FOCUS

4TH IOC WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND SPORT, JORDAN

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“Sport as a vehicle for social change”



Anita L. DeFrantz

The topic of the 4th IOC Women and Sport Conference is “Sport as a vehicle for social change”. This theme reflects the understanding that sport is a powerful tool for addressing societal problems including those found in the areas of the environment, social justice, health and economic access. Sport reflects society in all the strengths

and weaknesses it exhibits. An assessment of the roles performed by women in the Olympic Movement is an important method for judging the progress of the Olympic Movement towards congruence with its fundamental principles.

Olympic Focus asked Anita DeFrantz, chairwoman of the IOC Women and Sport Commission, about the activities and plans linked to the Conference.

OF: WHY THIS TITLE FOR THE WOMEN AND SPORT CONFERENCE?

This title reflects our experiences since the first Conference. It has become abundantly clear that sport can affect all levels of society, uniting people from all walks of life. Sport can transform the way we view each other.

The interaction among the Olympians and others supporting them during the Olympic Games proves that people can live in peace and mutual respect. Our challenge is to find ways to ensure that the concepts of mutual respect and fair play continue between the Games. By examining how sport is a vehicle for social change, this Conference is bringing attention to both the gender inequities that exist in society and how they may be addressed.

OF: IS THERE A CLEAR STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUITY IN SPORT?

We have utilised a three-pronged strategy for the promotion of women in the Olympic Movement. The first strategy was to achieve equality in the number of male and female athletes competing at the Games. For Beijing, women will have 45% of the athlete positions. For the

2006 Turin Winter Games, women represented 38.2% of the athletes. The trend is strongly towards equality and the successful completion of this strategy.

This is a clear goal, which is promoted by IOC President Jacques Rogge. Most sports and disciplines



have added women's events for the Olympic programme. This is the role of the International Sports Federations (IFs). Olympic Solidarity is

also helping, through its scholarships, motivating all National Olympic Committees (NOCs) to enable as many women as possible to qualify for the Games. I am optimistic that we will achieve equality very soon.

Next, we set the goal of having at least 20% of the policy making boards comprising women. There have been successes and some unfortunate failures. In those cases where the goal has been met or exceeded, the sports or NOCs have benefited greatly. It is now important to accomplish this strategy at every level of sport and find methods to institutionalise this approach to governance.

The third prong of our strategy involved working in partnership with Olympic Solidarity to provide capacity-building regional seminars for women. Over 12 years, the seminars increased in sophistication: from providing education on the structures and opportunities within the Olympic Movement to developing strategic planning and networking skills, and then providing skills for negotiation, communication and public speaking tools.

OF: ARE THERE OTHER WAYS TO EXPAND YOUR REMIT?

Our primary concentration has been on the members of the Olympic family. We created the IOC Women and Sport World Trophy to reward those who have promoted women in sport in each continent and throughout the world. This public acknowledgement of the work to promote women has been very successful.

Another area of focus for us will be to provide resources for women athletes to become more involved in marketing and promotional activities. We will also continue to organise seminars for journalists who are interested in developing greater skill in following the work of the IOC for the promotion of women.



OF: HAS THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND SPORT ACTUALLY IMPROVED OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS?

Yes, we have made a great deal of progress. There are more women in leading positions in IFs, and there are nine NOCs that have women Presidents.

We must continue the work so that women will attain leadership roles as coaches and officials, and other important positions throughout the sports world. It is now expected that women will have a role at the decision-making table. Women are respected for the ideas and the work ethic they bring to the world of Olympic sport.

OF: WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN MOROCCO, IN 2004, AND JORDAN AS THE VENUES FOR THE LATEST WOMEN AND SPORT CONFERENCES?

Both these countries and their NOCs are leading by example, and have strong advocates – men and women – for this effort. Jordan and Morocco are showing us how women can be promoted in an Arab society. We hope that this example will encourage other NOCs in the region and beyond to follow their lead. Equally important, women are involved in the national leadership of sport. Just last year, IOC member and Olympic gold medallist Nawal El Moutawakel was appointed Minister of Youth and Sport in her country, Morocco.

OF: WHY IS THE STATUS OF WOMEN IMPORTANT FOR THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT?

When the Olympic Movement speaks of mutual respect, it must lead by example. For the future of sport, we need more people to be involved. Too often women remain the great untapped resource.

The increase in female Olympians is the logical and necessary result of the tradition of the Olympic Games to send out a call to all of the youth of the world to join together in the next host city of the Olympic Games. There is no doubt that “All of the Youth” means girls and boys, men and women.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE VIRTUAL CONGRESS

The 2009 Olympic Congress in Copenhagen will also address important issues linked to Women and Sport. Join in the virtual Congress, for which contributions can be submitted up to the end of 2008 on www.2009congress.olympic.org. Get active and express yourself!

PLACING JORDAN ON THE MAP IN WOMEN'S SPORT

For too long sport in Jordan, like the Arab World in general, has been perceived as a male-dominated section of society, but one woman is helping to smash those misconceptions by succeeding in what was previously considered a man's world.

Lana Al Jaghbeer is the Manager in the International Relations and Cooperation Department within the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) and has become the first Arab woman to complete the IOC's MEMOS course, which is a Master's in Sports Organisation and Management.

The 36 year-old has dedicated her life to sport and in particular the issue of promoting opportunities for women in sport, not only within Jordan but across the region.

"Growing up in our culture has meant in the past that opportunities have been somewhat limited, but not any more," she said. "Here in Jordan, through the guidance of HRH Prince Feisal Al Hussein (JOC President) and under the directives of His Majesty King Abdullah II, we enjoy a sport for all policy which means there is no discrimination between male and female, creed or colour."

Lana researched the subject extensively for her MEMOS thesis, entitled "How to attract Women into Sport in Jordan". Her findings underlined the fact that there were still not enough women considering sport as a healthy lifestyle option, nor a career choice.

"Across Jordanian society women are making their mark, but it will not change overnight and we all have to play our part in creating the opportunities," she said. "We have women ministers, politicians and business leaders, and some of our most successful athletes are women. At the last Olympic Games in Athens our team was 50 per



Above: Lana Al Jaghbeer with HRH Prince Feisal Al Hussein

cent men and 50 per cent women, and I expect it to be the same for Beijing. Also at the JOC, a large percentage of the staff is female, and our policy is to select new employees based on ability alone."

Lana graduated from the University of Jordan in 1997 with a Bachelor's in Physical and Sport Education and has taught sport education at all levels while coaching gymnastics and also becoming a judge and referee in the sport. She has also been a member of the Jordan Women's Football Commission. Her commitment to sport on an academic as well as on a grassroots level have

made her very much a pioneering figure in the field of women and sport. This is also underlined by the fact that she will be the Chef de Mission for the Kingdom's participation in Beijing.

Despite such a hectic and busy career path, Lana has also confronted admirably the other issues that women face across the world. She got married in 2007 and is currently expecting her first child. One thing is for certain, whether it is a boy or a girl, the child can expect full support from its mother should he or she decide to venture down the sporting path.



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AWARD WINNERS, 2008		AWARD WINNERS, PREVIOUS YEARS			
2008	Africa	Ana Paula Dos Santos (Angola)	WORLDWIDE	2007	Portia Simpson Miller (Jamaica)
	America	Abby Hoffman (Canada)		2006	Gabriela Sabatini (Argentina)
	Asia	Lingwei Li (China)		2005	Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki (Greece)
	Europe	Stefka Kostadinova (Bulgaria)		2004	FIFA Women's World Cup
	Oceania	Debbie Watson (Australia)		2003	none
	Worldwide	Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said (Malaysia)		2002	Billie Jean King (United States)
		2001		Australian Olympic Committee (Australia)	
		2000	International Basketball Federation		

Left: Portia Simpson Miller (JAM), winner of the 2007 World Award. Below: Jacques Rogge with all the 2007 award winners

