

FIFA, football and women: why reform must specify inclusion and investment

*Submission to Mr Francois Carrard, Chair of FIFA Reform Committee
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Under pressure from authorities, commercial partners and stakeholders within, FIFA is in need of imminent change. The moment has arrived for far-reaching reforms.

With this pressure comes the opportunity to correct what is perhaps the most profound, long-standing and systemic injustice in sport – the exclusion of women and girls from the world’s most popular game, football.

This submission sets out the case for this to be rectified as part of the Reform process. It is structured as follows:

1. What’s the problem?
 - a. Under-representation,
 - b. Under-resourcing.
2. Why these issues must be addressed in the Reforms.
3. Proposals
 - a. Inclusion in decision-making,
 - b. Investment in the women’s game.

1 What’s the problem?

Football today is overwhelmingly male – not because women and girls are inherently disinterested or incapable, but rather due to decades of institutional and social barriers that prevent them from playing. When girls don’t play, women’s equity in leadership in technical, administration and governance remains under-realized¹.

Too few decision-makers in football appreciate the nature and scale of the issue, because the sufferers are barely present to voice it or challenge the existing assumptions. However, at the 2015 FIFA Women’s Football Symposium, delegates from the 171 member associations (MAs) present called for far-reaching reforms that would fundamentally alter football’s profile.²

Two issues in these ‘Calls to Action’ can be directly addressed by this Reform Committee, and are elaborated below. Given that women constitute an enormous growth opportunity for football, such measures would undoubtedly serve FIFA’s objectives.

A *Women are under-represented in decision-making*

Women comprise only 8% of ExCo members globally³. At Confederation level, only 8 women hold ExCo positions, and some Confederations have none. Within FIFA itself, there are 3 women out of 26 ExCo members; the Standing Committees contain hardly any women (outside the women’s football committees) and only one Director is female. Globally, just 2 of 209 MA Presidents are women - less than 1% of the voting population in FIFA Congress - and in the majority of Confederations there are none at all. Only 7% of registered coaches are female, and they battle a “grass ceiling” despite their qualifications and disproportionate success⁴.

¹ THNK School of Creative Leadership, FIFA Female Leadership Development Challenge Brief.

² See Attachment A for a full list of the 2015 Symposium Calls to Action.

³ FIFA Women’s Football Survey 2014 (produced by CIES Football Observatory) p 38-39.

⁴ The presence of female coaches is highly correlated to results, according to the FIFA Women’s Football Survey 2014 (p 13). Six of the 7 world championships (FIFA Women’s World Cups and Olympic gold medals) since 2000 have been won by female coaches.

The fact is that 111 years after FIFA was formed, women are still vastly under-represented at every level of the pyramid in the world's most-loved game. These patterns are sadly resistant to progress. Indeed, the MAs in the most established Confederations, UEFA and CONMEBOL, have the least women on their boards⁵.

It is not only football that has disproportionately low female participation in decision-making: it is a pattern in society generally. Improving this ratio is now recognised as a major driver of social and corporate value. A large body of emerging research shows materially positive effects of gender balancing, such as:

- 26 % better share price, where at least one woman is on the board,⁶
- 56% better EBIT and 41% better RoE than that achieved by all-male executive committees,⁷ and
- reduced severity and frequency of fraud⁸.

Why does this happen? Diverse groups make better decisions than homogenous groups because they are more broadly informed⁹, they benefit from the complementary styles and capabilities of both genders¹⁰ and they benefit from a greater range of perspectives and ideas, thus spurring innovation and problem-solving effectiveness.¹¹

These benefits are now so clear that governments and business entities worldwide are adopting targets and quotas, and initiating measures to attract and retain female talent. The United Nations did so in 1995 with its Beijing Declaration.¹² McKinsey has estimated that USD12 trillion could be added to global GDP in the next ten years, by advancing women's equality¹³. And in sport, the European Commission recently called for minimum 30% gender representation in international sports governing bodies, 40% in national sports governing bodies, with a minimum 40% in management¹⁴.

To achieve these benefits, critical mass is essential. Once there are 30% women in a group, the culture shifts. They cease being considered as 'special-interest' representatives, and instead become part of the mainstream. Their presence is "normalized", and unconscious biases begin to melt away. Attachment B elaborates on the importance of 30%, citing examples of European governments where this minimum threshold has been adopted.

Of all sports, football in particular – a man's world for so long – stands to benefit immeasurably by improving its gender balance.

B Women's football is under-resourced

Perhaps the most evident hallmark of the women's game is its systematic under-resourcing throughout the world. Even though FIFA outlaws discrimination, it is still the case that many girls grow into women without having the chance to play in a team or know how it feels to score a goal. Those who do get less opportunities, fewer competitions, reduced support and diminished rewards compared to their male peers, largely because historical, social and institutional bans¹⁵ have delayed competitions¹⁶ and suffocated development.

⁵ FIFA Women's Football Survey 2014 p 39 shows CONMEBOL (2%) and UEFA (6%) have the lowest % of women on Executive Committees of member associations.

⁶ *Gender Diversity and Corporate Performance*, Credit Suisse AG, 2012. Companies with at least one woman on the board outperformed stocks with no women on the board by 26%.

⁷ *Women Matter, Gender diversity at the top of corporations: Making it happen*, McKinsey, 2010 found that companies with top-quartile representation of women in executive committees outperform companies with all male executive committees by 41% in terms of return on equity and 56% in terms of operating results (EBIT)

⁸ Cumming, DJ and Leung TY and Rui, OM, *Gender Diversity and Securities Fraud* (9 February 2015) *Academy of Management Journal*, ACAD MANAGE J, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2562399>.

⁹ Van Kippenberg, D and M.C. Schippers (2007), *Work Group Diversity*. *Annu. Rev Psychol.* 58: 515-541.

¹⁰ International Labour Organization (2015), *Women on Boards: Building the female talent pipeline*.

¹¹ McKinsey & Company, 2014; Fisher, 2013

¹² United Nations 1995, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action sets 2 key objectives: measures to ensure women's equal access and full participation in power structures and decision-making, and to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

¹³ *McKinsey Global Institute Report*, September 2015

¹⁴ European Commission, *Gender Equality in Sport, Proposals for Strategic Action 2014-2020*, at p 15.

¹⁵ Women's football was banned in England (1921-71), Brazil (1941-79), Holland (in 1896), Germany (official matches banned until 1970), among other countries. Reasons included medical and scientific opinion that football was unsuitable for female bodies. See David Goldbatt, *The Ball is Round: A Global History of Football* at pp 180-182.

¹⁶ FIFA's first women's football tournament was held in 1988; the first FIFA Women's World Cup in 1991, and women's football was first played in the Olympics in 1996. Currently, FIFA still holds only men's competitions in club football, futsal, and beach soccer, and at lower levels this pattern is similar or even more male-skewed.

The resourcing is presently so lopsided that global aggregate spending by MAs is only USD156m¹⁷ – a tiny fraction of the total. Barely 40% of member associations offer girls grassroots programs¹⁸ and all around the world, competitions and playing pathways are more limited. Even in FIFA itself, development funds dedicated to women’s football amount to only a modest share of the total.

Under-resourcing reinforces the perception that football is a game for men, confining women to the margins and creating the environment for discrimination. At the 2015 FIFA Symposium, a spot survey was conducted among the female delegates of 171 countries. Of the respondents¹⁹, 63% said they had observed gender discrimination in football, and 43% had personally experienced it. And 82% expressed their belief that gender discrimination was preventing women’s football from achieving its potential.

Clearly, football has a problem.

There is no overnight solution, but it begins with respecting the legitimate involvement of women by providing meaningful opportunities for them to participate. Equitable resourcing of those opportunities would immediately begin to transform the football landscape from the grassroots up.

To imagine the success of fair resourcing, one only need examine the impact in North American educational institutions where government funding was tied to the provision of non-discriminatory programs²⁰. While this was not aimed solely at sports programs, the impact was to increase female participation in athletic programs from 7% to 41% since the rule was introduced in the 1970s, while maintaining male participation levels.

Observers of 1970s North America could be forgiven for failing to predict the extraordinary outcomes for football, which is now the 3rd most participated women’s sport and played in 92% of US colleges. This rule launched the highest participation rate in the world for women’s football (450 out of 10,000 inhabitants in US and Canada), which is 9.5 times the global average, more than 6 times the UEFA and OFC averages, more than 25 times the AFC and CAF averages, and exactly 75 times the CONMEBOL average.²¹ This astonishing participation level has translated to elite performance. The US has won 3 of the 7 FIFA Women’s World Cups played so far - as many as all of Europe combined - and 4 out of 5 Olympic gold medals.

Football’s stated ideal of ‘no discrimination’ has not yet translated into the active provision of equal opportunities for girls and women to participate in football.²² As the biggest and most popular sport in the world, football is well-placed to invest in its largest, least-developed “greenfields” opportunity – the women’s game. The impact would be transformative. With fair and proportionate resourcing, football can become the leading sport for women in the world – as it deserves to be, and as it already is for men.

2 Why is this a matter for the Reform Committee?

There are several reasons why the Reform Committee must act, and act now.

- FIFA needs to rapidly rehabilitate its own image, and the image of football. Addressing gender imbalance is a visible and convincing means to demonstrate that this Reform Committee, FIFA and football are prepared to lead rather than lag society, and be a vehicle for progress rather than a haven for misconduct. It will build FIFA’s equity among the stakeholders of today and tomorrow, recognizing the fundamental shift in society’s expectations, and this will contribute enormously to rebuilding the credibility of FIFA, and football, in the eyes of the watching world.
- Gender discrimination has been systematically and institutionally practiced *by football’s own governing bodies*, including through bans and institutional neglect, over many decades. This has occurred despite the

¹⁷ FIFA Women’s Football Survey 2014 p 18. In CAF, the median spend is only USD37,500 p.a., being the minimum compulsory 15% women’s football share of FIFA’s Financial Assistance Program (FAP) grants.

¹⁸ FIFA Women’s Football Survey 2014 p 41. Grassroots programs were defined as girls under 12 programs.

¹⁹ 61 responses were returned in a spot survey distributed to delegates on the final day of the Symposium, 5 July 2015.

²⁰ Under what is known as Title IX in the US, “no person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

²¹ FIFA Women’s Football Survey p 51.

²² For example, see David Goldblatt, *The Game of our Lives*, chapter 7: Last Man Standing? English Football and the Politics of Gender.

provisions of FIFA Statutes and Codes that explicitly prohibit discrimination²³. For this reason alone, governance reform must encompass further, more specific measures.

- Better gender balance of itself will deliver improvements in critical aspects of football's governance by creating a better, more diverse decision-making environment and a culture that is less prone to corruption. FIFA urgently needs both, and has been pressed by, and made promises to, various bodies:
 - In March 2015, FIFA signed the Brighton + Helsinki Declaration, affirming the organization's commitment to gender equality. In pursuance of that commitment, FIFA should increase equality measures within its own governance systems.
 - It has also been called upon by the European Commission to ensure better gender balance in decision-making, as well as members of the US Congress.
 - FIFA has been urged to act by stakeholders within FIFA, including the Women's Football Symposium in July 2015²⁴, and the Task Force for Women's Football in August 2015²⁵.
- These benefits will be brought forward by years, if not decades, through immediate, decisive reforms. Change takes time: the World Economic Forum calculates that the global gender gap in economic participation and opportunity will take 81 years to close²⁶. The FIFA Secretary General recently observed that it has taken many World Cups for the men's competition to reach its current stature, and there are 13 more editions until the Women's World Cup potentially reaches the same level²⁷. This implies the year 2067. At that rate, a girl born about the year 2040 might grow up to be the first woman to enjoy equality.

Football cannot wait, and women should not be asked to wait any longer. The Reform Committee must hear the calls to action from the game's most excluded constituency, and look to accelerate gender inclusion by recommending these proposals for immediate enactment.

3 Proposals

A *Inclusion in decision-making*

The Reform Committee is respectfully requested to recommend an immediate 20% presence of women on the FIFA Executive Committee, to be mirrored within a reasonable time at all levels (Confederations, MAs, clubs, etc) with a longer-term target of 30% gender balance.

Further details of the proposal and its implementation are set out in Attachment C.

B *Investment in the women's game*

The Reform Committee is respectfully requested to recommend an immediate requirement for all football stakeholders (including governing bodies and clubs) to actively resource participation opportunities for women and girls at all levels, without gender discrimination in fair financial proportion to its female participation and potential.

Further details of the proposal and its implementation are set out in Attachment D.

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²³ See FIFA Statutes, Art 3; FIFA Code of Conduct, Art 3.3; FIFA Code of Ethics, Art 23.

²⁴ <http://www.fifa.com/womens-football/news/y=2015/m=7/news=a-host-of-inspiring-ideas-for-a-better-future-2661483.html>. The calls to action are set out in full in Attachment A

²⁵ <http://www.fifa.com/womens-football/news/y=2015/m=8/news=task-force-calls-for-greater-inclusion-and-participation-of-women-2671762.html>

²⁶ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2014

²⁷ <http://www.theguardian.com/football/2015/jul/04/womens-world-cup-fifa-tournament-mens>

ATTACHMENT A

These are the Calls to Action from the FIFA Women's Football Symposium in Vancouver, 5 July 2015.

Governance

FIFA to issue guidelines on gender inclusiveness in football governance and management, to keep Confederations and MAs appraised and updated on those guidelines, and to itself be the role model for those guidelines, including:

1. A target of 30% women's participation (the 'tipping point') in all boards, committees and senior management,
2. Women's football being represented the highest level (representative on the Executive Committee, and director reporting to CEO/Secretary General),
3. Women's football being fully integrated in the strategy and processes in every member association, including the club licensing management process, adapted to their specific needs and situations.

Competitions & participation

FIFA to:

4. Issue a strategy and plan (and encourage and support Confederations, Member Associations to adopt that plan) to make football female-friendly, including through equally accessible participation, through national team programs, through coaching and refereeing opportunities, through inclusion of women in all MA coaching and refereeing courses, and through club and league activity,
5. Continue to develop its competitions to showcase the best of the game worldwide, improve football technically, and increase the number of female coaches, referees & administrators.

Business

FIFA to:

6. Issue a declaration and guidelines for all football stakeholders (including governing bodies & clubs) to resource football at all levels without discrimination as to gender, in fair financial proportion to our participation and potential,
7. Develop and implement a high-growth commercial strategy for incubating and growing women's football, and make it the highest value women's sporting property in the world.

ATTACHMENT B

This attachment sets out evidence from management literature showing the impact of gender diversity at levels of 30% +; and gives examples of government implementations of targets and quotas at this level.

Benefits of gender diversity at 30% or more

A number of important studies over the last several years have indicated that gender diversity on boards and in management teams delivers better decision-making and superior performance, particularly at level of 30%+.

- In a study of more than 150 German firms over five years, researchers confirmed that boards need a critical mass of about 30 percent women to outperform (as measured by return on equity) all-male boards. This translates into a “magic number” of about three women, based on average board size (Jasmin Joecks, Kerstin Pull, and Karin Vetter, *Gender Diversity in the Boardroom and Firm Performance: What Exactly Constitutes a 'Critical Mass'?*, Social Sciences Research Network, Working Paper Series, 2012)
- McKinsey measured the “organizational excellence” of companies in Europe, North America, and Asia by evaluating them on nine organizational criteria. When they examined the senior management teams of these companies, they found that those with three or more women had higher scores, on average, than teams with no women. McKinsey found that the score increased significantly once critical mass was reached—about one-third women (*Women Matter: A Corporate Performance Driver*, McKinsey 2007)
- Gender diversity in leadership has the potential to drive superior organizational effectiveness: companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher on all nine dimensions of organizational effectiveness - direction, leadership, culture and climate, accountability, coordination and control, capability, motivation, external orientation, and innovation and learning (*Women Matter, GCC Women in Leadership: From the First to the Norm*, McKinsey & Company, 2014)
- An extensive report by Catalyst across Fortune 500 companies positions ‘is three a charm?’ showed that stronger than average financial results prevail at companies where at least three women serve on their boards (*The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards*, Catalyst 2007)
- The 30% "norm" is widely recognized in initiatives such as the 30% Club (www.30percentclub.org) which states on their website: “Research suggests that 30% is the proportion when critical mass is reached – in a group setting, the voices of the minority group become heard in their own right, rather than simply representing the minority.”

Government implementations of 30%+ quotas and targets in the EU

In the three years from October 2010 to October 2013 the share of women on boards increased in 22 of the 28 European Union Member States. Most of the significant improvements took place in countries that have taken or considered legislative action or had an intensive public debate on the issue. Member States with targets or quotas are as follows:

- France: 40% by 2017 applicable to executives and non-executives in listed and non-listed large companies
- Germany: 30% strict quota for supervisory boards of the biggest listed companies from 2015
- Italy: 33 % by 2015 for listed companies and state-owned companies, applicable to management boards and supervisory boards
- Netherlands: target of 30% in the executive boards and supervisory boards of large companies
- Austria: 35% women on supervisory boards of state-owned companies by 2018
- Belgium: 33% for executives and non-executives in state-owned and listed companies by 2017 and by 2019

The European Commission itself has set a quantitative objective of at least 40% representation for each gender among non-executive directors by 2020. However, it is not a rigid quantitative quota obligation that would result in sanctions if it is not reached. It is a procedural quota : the proposed Directive sets out a fair and transparent board selection process until the 40% objective is achieved. Companies, which have not yet reached this threshold, have to ensure that their selection procedures are objective and transparent and based on clear and gender-neutral criteria. Companies also have to disclose the qualification criteria applied in case of a challenge to an appointment. This approach guarantees that qualification and merit remain the key criteria for a job on the board. Only where two candidates are equally qualified, will priority be given to the candidate of the under-represented sex.

Source: *Improving the gender balance in corporate boardrooms*, European Commission 2014

ATTACHMENT C

It is proposed that the following minimum levels of gender balance be set:

	Body	Instruments
1	FIFA ExCo: 20% (1 woman per Confederation immediately, or 6/30)	FIFA Statutes
2	Confederation ExCos: by end 2016 (or at the next Congress thereafter) enact measures to reach 20% gender balance in ExCo by end 2018 (or next Congress thereafter)	FIFA Statutes, Confederation Statutes
3	MA ExCos: by end 2016 (or at the next Congress thereafter) enact measures to reach 20% gender balance in ExCo by end 2018 (or next Congress thereafter)	FIFA Standard Statutes MA Statutes
4	Club Boards: 20% gender balance in ExCo by end 2019	MA or league statutes / regulations. FIFA club licensing regulations
5	FIFA, Confederation and MA Standing Committees: target 20% gender balance by 2018 (or next Congress thereafter)	FIFA, Confederation and MA Statutes; FSS
6	Committees and senior management teams in all bodies above: target of 30% gender balance by 2020.	Gender inclusion guidelines (<i>new</i>)

Consequences

The 20% *targets* listed above should be reached by the dates specified. As bodies reach these targets, they should be named positively on a compliance list and could potentially become eligible for certain additional rights (such as hosting certain events, or participating in certain development programs).

In the event that they are not reached, consequences should flow in order to ensure that these targets have tangible application and do not remain merely numbers on a page.

Ideally such consequences would escalate from mild to more serious if the non-compliance continues over a number of years. For example:

1. warning of future consequences; named on non-compliance list,
2. subject to closer monitoring on nomination processes
3. loss of or reduction in eligibility to receive FIFA grants or participate in development programs,
4. loss of some rights to nominate members to committees on FIFA bodies, and/or for nominated members to sit or vote on those committees,
5. loss of bidding rights to host certain FIFA events or competitions,
6. loss of Congress rights, such as a reduction in the number of attendees, or voting rights.
7. loss of eligibility to enter FIFA competitions.

Consequences could be applied to both MAs, Confederations and Clubs, via different regulatory mechanisms.

The 30% *target* is a “soft” target with recognition once reached. Initially, there would be no defined consequences if it is not reached. However, after 2020, the consequences for any non-compliance should be reconsidered.

ATTACHMENT D

It is proposed that the FIFA Statutes be amended to include the following (or similar) additional principle in Article 3:

3. Non-discrimination, gender equality and stance against racism

...

Football shall be resourced without discrimination as to gender, in fair proportion to female participation and potential.

This “fair go” principle should bind Confederations, MAs and Clubs via appropriate regulatory mechanisms (e.g. FIFA Standard Statutes, Club licensing regulations).

Such regulatory mechanisms would need to elaborate and implement the principles in Article 3, providing:

- A framework for compliance with Article 3, setting out how it can be complied with in order to provide sensible, measured progress towards the end goal of full female participation e.g.
 - Resourcing in proportion with participation
 - Substantial progress towards resourcing in proportion with participation
 - Substantial progress towards the equal provision of participation opportunities (i.e. creating demand) or other initiatives to grow demand
 - Demonstrated equivalence, or substantial progress towards equivalence, in the conditions under which women and girls participate e.g. access to infrastructure and support services, such as medical support, media support coaching, team transport, coach and referee education, equipment, training facilities, etc.
- Monitoring and reporting of resource allocation (including financial spend) by gender in MAs and Confederations
- Reporting of participation and competition activity by gender, including mixed-gender football, for players, coaches and match officials.

Such an approach would provide flexibility in how MAs, Clubs and Confederations deliver a “fair go”. For example, club activity could include provisioning women’s youth team and development program; an MA with negligible women’s participation might deploy programs to cultivate new opportunities for girls at the grassroots level, while an MA with a professionalised league might look to improve matchday media operations to enable better coverage.

It should not be misunderstood to be an obligation that requires 50c in every dollar to be spent on women’s football. It is not. What it would require is consistent efforts to provide a “fair go” for women and girls.