

**During the 4th IOC World Conference on Women and Sport held in Jordan, the international participants committed themselves to promote the advancement of women in sport through the Olympic Movement. This set of principles is known as the Dead Sea Plan of Action**

# Olympic movement to promote women

The IOC World Conference on Women in Sport held in Jordan earlier this year highlighted opportunities offered by the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Beijing, the quadrennial elections of National Organising Committees (NOCs), the Olympic Congress in 2009 in Copenhagen and the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) to advance the cause of women in sport.

This will be done by requesting the IOC President to remind international federations, organising bodies and continental associations of the necessity and value of having women on their highest policy making bodies.

The chairperson of the IOC Women and Sport Commission was requested to propose to the 120th IOC Session in Beijing in August 2008 that it becomes a mandatory requirement for all NOCs to have women on their executive committees, and that this be an enforceable requirement.

The IOC Women and Sport Commission will further actively encourage registration and participation of women and girls in the virtual congress which the IOC has established on its website. The Commission will identify and invite a minimum of 10 subscribers who will contribute in-depth and authoritative papers on women and girls in the themes of the congress.

## Youth Olympic Games

The conference also called for the newest addition to the Olympic movement, the YOG to reflect gender balance in athlete representation, technical and administrative officials and general leadership.

The conference also took note of the IOC Consensus Statements on *Training the Elite Child Athlete*, *The Female Athlete Triad* and *Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Sport* and their relevance to the YOG project.

The conference underlined the need for well researched data upon which strategy

Number of men and women athletes competing			
	Women	Men	% Total
Athens 2004	4,329	6,296	41%
Sydney 2000	4,069	6,582	38%
Atlanta 1996	3,523	6,797	34%
Barcelona 1992	2,704	6,652	29%
Seoul 1988	2,194	6,197	26%

*Figures for Beijing Olympics not available at the time of going to press.*

could be developed and promoted. It was also emphasised that key performance indicators (KPI) should be set, and a mechanism developed to monitor progress.

**Research:** The IOC has in the past collaborated with relevant organisations to produce reliable data on the involvement of women in the Olympic Movement. This information has been invaluable in gender equality development policy. The conference requested that the data be updated with a broader scope as a matter of urgency, and shared throughout the Olympic Movement and all stakeholders.

The Commission should request that the IOC set the necessary KPIs that will help provide guidance to the Olympic Movement and monitor progress against set targets.

**Networking:** There is a need to create a *women in the Olympic Movement* network so that they can exchange ideas on best practice and help each other. The conference recommended that the existing *Women and Sport* platform on the IOC website be considered as the starting point for such a resource.

**Involve men:** The conference noted the need for men in decision-making positions and from diverse backgrounds to participate in the women and sport forums and conferences.

## Empowerment through Education and Development

The conference recognised the importance for women to have access to, and participate in sport. This will enable them to develop self-esteem and be inspirational. The involvement of women who have reached the top in sports administration and former athletes as role models, was emphasised.

The conference acknowledged the need to redefine the purpose and content of the women and sport regional and sub-regional forums from policy discussion meetings, to leadership training sessions.

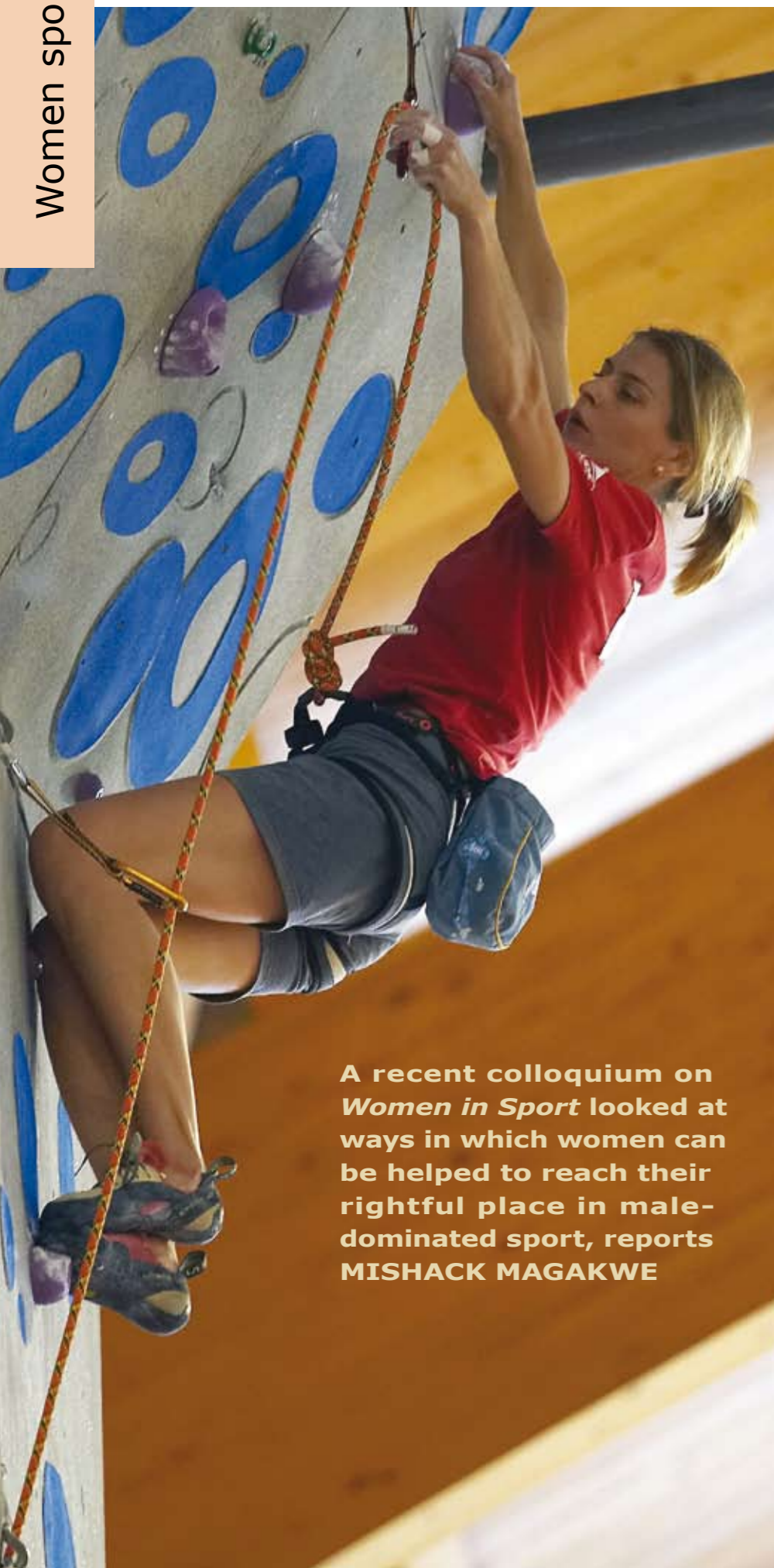
## Women, Sport and the Media

Participants noted with concern the disparity and treatment of women's sport by the media, both in terms of reporting their activities and the employment of women sports journalists. It was also noted that in most countries, sports journalism was not accorded the same importance as other areas of the profession.

They requested the IOC to encourage women sports journalists to take an active part in covering the Olympic Games and related events. The responsible IOC Departments and Olympic Solidarity should strengthen training for women in sport on how to work with the media.

## Women, Sport and the MDGs

The conference recognised the fundamental principles and goals of Olympism and re-emphasised the role that the Olympic Movement can play in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which are all directly, or indirectly, related to women and girls. In this regard, the conference takes note of the fact that the IOC has signed a Memoranda of Understanding with 14 UN Specialised Agencies, and has a special working relationship with the UN itself. **YS**



**A recent colloquium on *Women in Sport* looked at ways in which women can be helped to reach their rightful place in male-dominated sport, reports MISHACK MAGAKWE**

# Help for women to reach the top

**W**omen's participation in sport has a history marked by division and discrimination, but also one filled with major accomplishments by female athletes. SRSA is driving a process that will culminate in a new voice being heard in the sport fraternity, representing women in the sports fields that have been predominantly male dominated.

SRSA held a *Women in Sport* colloquium in Boksburg in August this year to address gender issues like equalizing the playing fields, fostering social cohesion and creating a platform for South African women to identify their challenges and a way forward.

The two-day-conference received an overwhelming positive response and support with the attendance of SRSA Director-General, Xoliswa Sibeko, athletes, sports administrators, Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Sport and Recreation members and government officials who are in charge of sport in their respective departments.

Some issues that were given priority by the conference are: social cohesion through sport and transformation; gender equality as a fundamental human right; and the Dead Sea of Plan of Action as adopted by the IOC (see previous page).

This initiative is aimed at strengthening solidarity and building capacity in sport structures.

The programme allowed open, constructive and broad-based discussions.

Amongst the concerns raised by delegates were: coverage of sports women in the media; the fact that there are only a few women in sporting structures; the funding of women sport; and the use of skilled women to deal with issues that are not necessarily high



*Nonkongozelo Ndiki, senior Sport and Recreation Coordinator, Special Projects, and Butana Khomphele, chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Sport and Recreation, listening to deliberations at the colloquium.*

profile and the oppression of women by women who hold higher posts in sport structures.

Butana Komphela, Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Sport and Recreation Chairperson, said that it is very disturbing that sport is still male-dominated, with less access for women, and that the old mentality that "*he place of the woman is in the kitchen*" still holds true in many communities, especially in rural areas. "There has to be a paradigm shift to produce a healthy and winning nation," he said in his address. He stressed that women should

dominate the world sport stage as numbers are in their favour.

On the same note Sylvia Dale of SAS-COC said that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) adopted the Dead Sea Plan of Action in 2008 (see p17), which enshrines the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and their inclusion in higher positions in the highest policy making bodies. She also called on men to participate in a women's forum and that former female athletes should be given a bigger role to play. She reiterated that the outcry on the treatment

of women in sport by the media needs serious attention.

Matsolo Matoone, representing the Human Rights Commission, gave a brief summary of the rights of women and the protection of those rights. South African women have earned a place in our history books with their noticeable contribution towards attainment of our freedom, she said. She urged delegates to continue to advance the same ideals for the true emancipation of women's dignity as equal partners to their male counterparts in all aspects. Women should stand up for the recognition of their rights.

Presenting the way forward, Director-General of SRSA, Xoliswa Sibeko, said that the conference underlined the need for well-researched data, upon which strategy could be developed and promoted. Men in decision-making positions and from diverse backgrounds should be encouraged to participate in forums and conferences on women in sport.

In addition to tasks allocated to people in various structures, the department will, amongst others, implement resolutions taken at the 2003 Women's Conference by assigning roles and responsibilities through consultation workshops.

SRSA will also collaborate with the Department of Communication and media houses to draft legislative requirements for media groups to allocate a certain quota of space or broadcast time to women and sport.

The Sport Portfolio Committee was also given the task to schedule regular meetings with the Commission on Gender Equality. **YS**

*Right: The Women's World Cup of Golf are looking for girls from previously disadvantaged communities with a natural ability to play golf. This is part of Project Golf 2014, an initiative with the aim of producing 2 014 girls with official golf handicaps by the year 2014, in order to redress past imbalances. Recently, twenty primary school girls from Alexandra, who had never been exposed to golf, were selected for a 10-week training programme covering the rules and techniques of playing golf. A further select group will continue at an advanced level. The top qualifying girls will receive a set of golf clubs and a golf course membership. On completion of the full training program the girls will be mentored by the regional amateur body, Women's Golf South Africa, who will assist in ensuring that these girls compete in local amateur tournaments to build their talents further. The project was launched last year by Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (far right with Tania Fourie, Women's World Cup CEO). **YS***



*Left: Women's Day was celebrated in Soweto with the Philips Zodwa Khoza Memorial Cup, jointly hosted by Philips SA and SAFA Soweto. Six women soccer teams competed for the league title and cup, named after Irvin Khoza's late daughter Zodwa. Three weeks of women's soccer matches culminated in the final in which the Chiawelo Fabulous Ladies (left) beat Colchester by one goal. One of the highlights was a surprise visit by the Netherlands national women's soccer team, accompanied by local soccer stars Banyana Banyana. Women from the Soweto Home for the Aged were honoured guests at the final soccer day. **YS***

# Still so many hurdles to overcome

FANIE HEYNS spoke to some of South Africa's top sports-women about the hurdles women still have to overcome in order to be treated the same as male athletes



The revival of women's sport to make South African women an even more dominant force on the African continent, was one of the highlights of the *Women in Sport* colloquium hosted by SRSA at the end of August (see previous pages).

Why?

We have arguably the greatest female breaststroker in the history of swimming — Penny Heyns — who won gold in the 100 and 200m at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. We also boast the teenager who became the youngest ever world record holder in any sport in 1965 at age 12, called Karen Muir.

We also have one of the bravest and most famous sporting athletes in history in Natalie du Toit, who qualified for the final of the 800m freestyle at the 2002 Commonwealth Games, swam the marathon in the Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, won five gold medals at the Paralympic Games in Beijing and proudly carried our flag at both Games.

## Ahead of game

As Marianne Kriel, a former bronze-medal-winner at the Olympic Games in Atlanta and a former national captain, said: "I believe we are a natural talented sports nation, with women who can be the greatest in the world. Our swimmers, like Jessica Pengelly, Kathryn Meaklin and Suzaan van Biljon could go a long way."

"I think South Africa is ahead of the game in certain aspects of women in sport, and really behind in others. Our leaders have no problem making a woman the captain or flag bearer of a team, and actually encourage this," adds Kriel.

"I do think that some TV networks are making a concerted effort to show more sports that involve women, which will lead

to more sponsorships and will allow women to make a living doing something they are good at — at least for a while."

Sure, but her answer also betrays the reason why the revival of a women's sport structure is being pursued by SRSA.

No South African women finished in close proximity to the podium at the World Championships in athletics in 2007, or at the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008.

## A cultural barrier?

Ross Tucker, a prominent sports scientist at the University of Cape Town, says the removal of physical exercise from the school curriculum was a major blow to women in sport, because for many girls that is the only opportunity to do sport.

Taking that away effectively cut off all access to sporting activity.

Sport is a very culturally-driven thing. It requires a community, a peer group and a family support unit in order to produce sporting people. It is no coincidence, says Tucker, that all the great women athletes are white, and you'll notice that most are Afrikaners.

"That's a political hot potato, and I don't wish to bring race into it, because I think it's more a case of economic and social factors pushing through young white women, and not black women. But, certainly, there's a big problem among the youth, because participation in women's sport does not seem to be on the rise."

## Gender inequality

Where Tucker refers to the cultural barrier for women's participation in sport, Cheryl Roberts expresses her concern about social and financial discrimination and the lack of gender equality in the South African society.

"How many of South Africa's interna-

tional sportswomen are contracted to a sponsor or offered endorsement packages, and how many sportswomen are ever interviewed by the media," asks Roberts.

"While we applaud the efforts of our sportsmen, we ask, how much longer will our sportswomen continue to be ignored and not taken seriously?"

"After all, we also buy the cars, air time, houses, use services of airlines financial institutions, support supermarkets and several other business houses. Yet these very same businesses continue to ignore sportswomen as nonentities," she adds.

She says South Africa is ploughing the country's resources into hosting the world's biggest sporting event, the 2010 Soccer World Cup, for the pride and self-belief of an entire South African nation and African continent.

But, through this euphoria we must remove our blinkers and assess the real impact and hidden consequences, that of consolidating male hegemony and entrenching power relations which benefit men.

"Just as our country initially endorsed and supported South Africa's 2010 bid and is now driving 2010 preparations, so too should we support a women's world sports event, like netball being staged in South Africa," says Roberts.

## Financial discrimination

Kriel supports Roberts on the issue of media-exposure and salaries: "If you compare exposure, salaries and careers for the main female sports to the main male sports, it is quite ridiculous how talented women have to struggle (think R150 000 per month versus R400 per month)."

She says financial support is the main critical area of need for South African women in sport. Women in the main are

still working from 9 to 5 and then fit in training and family on top of it due to a meagre income.

"If we allow talented women to focus on training, and give them an income that supports their families, and have a team of six people who look after their training needs, we will see a definite difference."

Desiree Ellis, a former captain of Banyana Banyana, strongly supports the sentiments expressed by Kriel.

She says individual, financial and technical sponsorships are in short supply in South Africa for women. "Training centres with quality coaches must be made available to form a national league as soon as possible."

"The national league would have the best playing against the best every week and would also attract the best players from neighbouring countries. There has been talk of the national league for the last five years. We are ready, but we must just be afforded the opportunity."

Ellis said she was sponsored by Nike for about five years, and received money as well, but need to work as this small amount would not have been able to sustain her. This is one of the many things that our sportswomen have to contend with.

She said she lost her job while playing for the national team and was unemployed for three years. "Where would you hear of that happening to a male athlete," she adds.

## The beach volleyball team

Leigh-Ann Naidoo, a member of the South African women's indoor volleyball team and coordinator of the Macsteel Maestro's life-skills program in the Northern provinces, says while Du Toit's ability to qualify for the able-bodied Olympic Games has been one of the greatest achievements

by a South African woman — the entire women's indoor volleyball national team was inspirational in the 1980's, when South African sport was isolated because of apartheid, and they were part of the non-racial sports movement SACOS.

She believes it was a massive achievement to have been a member of the first volleyball team from Africa to qualify for the Olympic Games. She competed with Julia Willand in the Beijing Olympics.

"Martha Masoahle being the first black woman to captain the SA netball team is also to my mind a great achievement, if you take into consideration the history and demographics of SA netball," says Naidoo. She also highlights the achievement of Marcia Marescia, who became the first black captain of the national hockey team.

## The way ahead

Mentioning just the few names of swimmers as some of the great SA performers would disregard the performances by Kriel, Elana Meyer (winner of the silver medal at the Olympic Games in 1992), Frith van der Merwe, Amanda Coetzer, Zola Pieterse, the weightlifters Babala Ndloleni and Portia Vries, Irene van Dyk and Hestrie Cloete (winner of the silver medal at the Olympic Games both in 2000 and 2004) as some of the finest performers the past 30 years.

While expressing her admiration for the gene pool in South African sport, Kriel is adamant that there are too many different programmes being pursued. "We need a centralized structure like the Australian Institute of Sport (see p10).

"They discover talent early, put them in effective training programmes and take care of most aspects of their lives once they start competing at an international

level.

"They include aspects like media training and financial advice, and they even secure jobs for athletes once they retire. Our sports women still mostly have to fend for themselves, and they can not be expected to compete with the best in the world unless this improves."

Naidoo says she would like to start the revival of South African women's sport by setting up structures within federations and the various sporting organisations — from national level, right down to grass roots level, to encourage and support as many girls and women to participate in some form of sport.

There should be a national structure set up for women in sport that includes all persons at various levels, to ensure that all persons work to improve the conditions for women to participate, and excel, in sport.

Roberts says today's sporting women have an important role to play in the coming decades because every human resource, every skill and every woman is needed if South Africa is to effectively challenge the patriarchal system and male domination of the South African sports paradigm.

Tucker says an added focus is required on the life skills component, because South African women need to learn how to exist in a society that doesn't necessarily support their endeavours.

The same things should be done for women as for men. "It requires funding, it requires expertise and it requires very onerous work to find individuals," he says.

"Unlike with men, you can't just cast the net out and hope to catch people. For women, you have to really focus on finding the talent, especially among the African population." **YS**