Chapter 6: Quotas to Accelerate Gender Equity in Sport Leadership: Do they work?

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Since 2008 Marisol Casado, a Spanish woman, has been the elected president of the

International Triathlon Union, the global governing body of that sport (International Triathlon

Union, 2016). Her position is unique as she is one of only six women occupying the role of

president of an international sport federation (International Working Group on Women and

Sport, 2016c). Throughout the world women and girls have embraced playing sport but there

has been no significant increase in the number of women in organisational leadership roles.

Although a substantial body of research has investigated the under-representation of women

in sport leadership (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2013; Burton, 2015; Claringbould & Knoppers,

2008, 2012; Hovden, 2010; Pfister & Radtke, 2009; Schull, Shaw, & Kihl, 2013; Shaw &

Hoeber, 2003; Shaw & Penney, 2003; Shaw & Slack, 2002), increasing women's presence at

the executive table remains a challenge. Yet the benefits of gender diversity in leadership are

widely acknowledged. A review of scholarship on women directors on corporate boards, for

example, was informed by more than 400 publications spanning the past 30 years (Terjesen,

Sealy, & Singh, 2009).

This chapter explores the use of gender quotas as a strategy to accelerate the growth of

women in sport leadership, particularly in the governance of national sport organisations

(NSOs) and international federations (IFs). First, I present an overview of the current global

status of women's participation in sport governance based on the Sydney Scoreboard, a

global index for women in sport leadership. This provides compelling evidence that only

limited progress has been made to date and gender equity in sport governance remains

elusive. Second, I discuss several strategies for disrupting the status quo at an international

level, including the *Brighton Plus Helsinki Declaration* and an important initiative by the

United Nations (Adriaanse & Claringbould, 2016) as well as the introduction of gender

quotas. The latter is controversial. Many organisations oppose this type of intervention

although quotas can be effective in bringing about positive change. Third, I explore the use

of quotas in the public, corporate and sport sectors. Drawing on examples from Norway

(Skirstad, 2009; Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011) and the International Olympic Committee

(IOC) (Henry et al., 2004; Henry & Robinson, 2010) I compare the effectiveness of targets

versus quotas. I also discuss the impact of quotas in sport governance based on a recent study

of Australian sport organisations. Finally, I draw conclusions about the use of quotas as a

strategy to accelerate gender equity in sport governance.

Current Status of Women's Participation in Sport Governance Globally

Data from the Sydney Scoreboard global index for women in sport leadership indicate that

women's representation in the governance of sport has increased in recent years

(International Working Group on Women and Sport, 2016c). The Sydney Scoreboard, a

legacy of the 5th IWG World Conference on Women and Sport, monitors women's presence

on sport boards using three key indicators: board directors, board chairs and chief executives.

At a national level, based on data from 38 countries and 1599 NSOs, the average

representation of women directors increased from 19.7% in 2010 to 20.7% in 2014

(International Working Group on Women and Sport, 2016c). Further, while the average for

women chairs remained the same at 10.6% during this period, the average for women chief

executives rose from 17.3% in 2010 to 19.8 % in 2014. See Table 1 for a summary of the

findings.

Table 1

Percentage of women as director/chair/chief executive of National Sport Organisations (NSOs) in 2010 and 2014

Leadership Position	2010	2014	Change
Women directors	19.7	20.7	+1
Women chairs	10.6	10.6	0
Women chief executives	17.3	19.8	+2.5

*based on 38 countries and 1599 NSOs – see sydneyscoreboard.com

At an international level, based on data from 76 IFs, the average representation of women directors went up from 12% in 2012 to 13.3% in 2014. In addition, women occupying the position of chair or president of an international federation increased from 7% to 8 % and those in the role of chief executive or secretary-general from 9% to 21 % in the same time period. Table 2 shows a summary of these results.

Table 2

Percentage of women as director/chair/chief executive of International Federations (IFs) in 2012 and 2014

Leadership Position	2012	2014	Change
Women directors	12	13.3	+1.3
Women chairs	7	8	+1
Women chief executives	9	21	+12

*based on 76 IFs – see sydneyscoreboard.com

It should be noted, however, that, in a number of IFs, women's participation rates in leadership were markedly below the average (International Working Group on Women and Sport, 2016c). Some 24 of 76 IFs had no women on their board in 2014, including several that govern popular global sports such as tennis, cricket, rugby, handball and baseball. In a

case of "reverse" gender inequity, the IF that governs the popular sport of netball had 0 %

men's participation on its board.   FIFA, the international governing body of the world's most

popular sport, football, had only one woman among its 24 executive members (4%) in 2014.

Although average results show an increase, albeit small, in women's representation in sport

governance globally, in all cases women remain markedly under-represented; none of the

indicators has yet reached 40%. As a measure of gender equity, a minimum of 40%

representation of men and women is often regarded as evidence of gender balance or gender

parity in groups. This target is adopted by researchers (Joecks, Pull, & Vetter, 2013; Kanter,

1977) and is also recommended by public policy makers in governance such as the Australian

Human Rights Commission (2010) and the European Parliament (Whelan & Wood, 2012).

The consequences of a lack of gender balance in board composition are twofold. First,

important stakeholders of the organisation are excluded from participation in decision-

making. Board directors play a critical role in developing strategy and decision-making as

they represent the source of values and objectives that develop and sustain an organisation

(Clarke, 2007). For example, hundreds of thousands of girls and women play tennis and

football worldwide; nevertheless they are represented minimally if at all at the highest level

of the sport's governance. This means that their voice is excluded from the shaping of core

organisational values and the creation of a strategic vision for the sport. Second, a substantial

body of research has demonstrated the advantages of a gender-balanced board (Bilimoria &

Wheeler, 2000; Nielsen & Huse, 2010; Terjesen et al., 2009; Torchia et al., 2011; van der

Walt & Ingley, 2003). These include greater sensitivity to different perspectives, which bodes

well for innovation and better decision-making and problem-solving. In addition, boards with

three or more women directors have been shown to be more inclined to consider non-

financial performance measures such as CSR involvement and stakeholder satisfaction

(Terjesen et al., 2009). These types of performance measures are increasingly essential for

the sustainability of contemporary organisations. In other words, a lack of gender balance in

board composition suggests that the governance of global sport is not reaching its full

potential (Adriaanse, 2016).

Disrupting the Status Quo

Several international strategies designed to address gender inequality in sport governance

have been implemented since the 1990s. The *Brighton Declaration* was the first international

declaration which specifically identified the aim of increasing women's participation in sport

leadership, with the goal of empowering women and advancing sport. This declaration was

informed by key UN documents such as the *Charter of the United Nations* (United Nations,

1945), the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations, 1948) and the

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

(United Nations, 1979). Representing a global voice, delegates from 82 countries adopted the

Brighton Declaration at the 1st IWG World Conference on Women and Sport in Brighton in

1994 (International Working Group on Women and Sport, 2016b). An updated version, the

Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration, was adopted by participants from almost 100 nations at

the 6th IWG World Conference on Women and Sport in Helsinki in 2014 (International

Working Group on Women and Sport, 2016b). One of the ten principles in this declaration

focuses on leadership in sport:

> Women remain under-represented in the leadership and decision making of all sport
>
> and sport-related organisations. Those responsible for these areas should develop
>
> policies and programmes and design structures which increase the number of women
>
> coaches, advisers, decision makers, officials, administrators and sports personnel at all
>
> levels with special attention given to recruitment, mentoring, empowerment, reward

and retention of women leaders (International Working Group on Women and Sport,

2016b, p. 10).

So far 441 organisations have signed the *Brighton Declaration* or updated *Brighton Plus*

Helsinki Declaration, including the most prestigious and influential sport bodies: the

International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee and FIFA

(International Working Group on Women and Sport, 2016a). Other international signatories

include the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations, the Commonwealth

Games Federation, the International University Sports Federation and SportAccord. Some 28

IFs and 66 National Olympic Committees have also signed the declaration, as well as many

government organisations such as ministries for sport and sport councils. A list of all

signatories can be viewed at http://iwg-gti.org/iwg-signatories-2/. In summary, many

organisations worldwide have committed to the advancement of women and sport at all levels

including women's representation in sport leadership.

Another important strategy for disrupting the status quo in the governance of sport globally

was the UN publication *Women 2000 and Beyond: Women, Gender Equality and Sport*

(United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2007*)*. It was developed in

collaboration with the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) and

WomenSport International and launched by the UN at the 52nd Session of the Commission on

the Status of Women at the UN Headquarters in New York in 2008. This was the first time in

the history of the United Nations that an entire publication was devoted to women and sport.

It urges a range of bodies, including governments, UN entities, sporting institutions and non-

government organisations, to take further action to address discrimination against women and

girls in sport. One of the specific issues it addressed was the under-representation of women

in decision-making bodies of sport organisations at local, national, regional and international level. In order to accelerate the process of change in sport governance it recommended:

> Establishing higher targets for women's participation in decision making and leadership…Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of initiatives, such as the use of targets and quotas, need to be significantly strengthened. Reliable and comparable data are required, both as an advocacy and awareness tool (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2007, pp. 29-30).

In line with this recommendation, the IWG decided that the legacy of its next conference, the 5th IWG World Conference on Women and Sport, would be the Sydney Scoreboard. Its purpose was to increase "[w]ithin the context of the achievement of the *UN Millennium Development Goals*…the number of women on the boards/management committees of all sport organisations at international, regional, national and local level" (International Working Group on Women and Sport, 2016c). The Sydney Scoreboard, an online tool, has since developed into a global index for women in sport leadership which has collected and displayed data on boards of national sport organisations and international federations since 2010. People active in the global women sport movement in approximately 50 countries have contributed data with the aim of raising awareness and promoting a new level of transparency and accountability around gender equity in sport leadership. Essentially, the tool was conceptualised as a catalyst for change. As previously noted, however, change has been extremely modest to date and gender balance in sport governance has not yet been achieved. What other initiatives or strategies have been or can be used?

Gender Quotas

A common strategy for accelerating women's participation in leadership has been the adoption of gender quotas, also referred to as affirmative or positive action. Gender quotas need to be distinguished from gender targets. While both quotas and targets refer to a minimum number or percentage of women in specific positions, quotas are mandated through legislation or some other form of regulatory requirement (Whelan & Wood, 2012). In the realm of sport, quotas can be embedded as a clause in the organisation's constitution or by-laws. Quotas are not negotiable and often need to be achieved within a specified timeframe. Non-compliance results in sanctions or penalties for the organisation. Gender targets, on the other hand, are more voluntary in nature, reflecting aspirational goals that the organisation hopes to achieve. They cannot be legally enforced and usually do not carry sanctions if not achieved. Nevertheless, managers can receive performance rewards if their organisation does reach the targets. Because of their voluntary nature, targets are more widely accepted by organisations than are quotas.

The main objection to gender quotas is the perception that women are appointed simply to fulfil the quota even if they lack the required qualifications and competency for the position. There is, however, no research evidence that women appointed under quotas are less competent or perform less effectively. Whelan and Wood (2012) provide a useful list of examples of common arguments for and against the use of quotas. They identify the following key arguments in favour of the introduction of quotas. After decades of aspirational programs and initiatives that have largely failed, quotas are an effective temporary measure to achieve greater gender equity. Only quotas can enforce the attainment of a critical mass of women in leadership roles. In addition, quotas encourage organisations to be innovative, to identify talented women and to work harder to provide development opportunities for them. In contrast, those against quotas often argue that they undermine the

principle that merit and meritocracy should take priority over diversity in business. Further, quotas lead to additional regulation, which increases costs and inefficiencies for organisations. Finally, many women themselves do not like to be appointed through quotas because they believe that their appointment will be viewed as tokenistic and not based on their qualities.

Use of Gender Quotas in the Public, Corporate and Sport Sectors

Although gender quotas are controversial, they were first used extensively in the political realm to increase women's representation in government. Subsequently, the corporate sector also adopted this strategy to increase gender balance on its boards. One of the more notable examples was the case in Norway. In 2005, the Norwegian government introduced a quota law that called for a minimum of 40% representation of men and women on the boards of its public limited-liability companies (Torchia et al., 2011). Interestingly, this law was passed after companies had been given the opportunity (in 2002) to voluntary implement a 40% target. When insufficient progress had been made after several years, the law was passed in 2005. Sanctions for non-compliance included dissolution of the company. Enforcement of the law began in 2008, by which time the majority of companies had already met the requirements. As a result of the quota law, women's participation on these Norwegian boards increased from 7% in 2003 to 40.3% in 2010. This example clearly demonstrates that quotas enforced by law are more effective then voluntary targets in achieving gender balance on boards.

The sport sector has been reluctant to adopt quotas. Even in Norway, sport organisations perceived a 40% gender quota as too radical (Skirstad, 2009). Following a consultation process on the strategic direction of Norwegian sport, participants agreed that women's

representation in leadership positions should increase, but they did not support the

implementation of a 40% gender quota. Nevertheless, women's representation in the General

Assembly of Norwegian sport, the highest decision-making body for sport, increased from

8% to 39% between 1971 and 2007. Skirstad (2009) attributed this dramatic improvement to

evolutionary changes in the internal and external contexts. The internal context refers to the

structure and culture within the sport organisation, while the external context refers to the

wider political, social and economic environment. Gender equity measures in Norwegian

society at large, influenced measures in the sport sector such as the adoption of a modest

target of a minimum of two male and two female representatives. Despite this modest target,

women's participation in the governance of Norwegian sport achieved a relatively high

proportion (39 %). This was largely facilitated by the broader environment – the external

context – which promoted a positive approach to gender equity. The positive change towards

gender equity on sport boards in Norway is continuing. In 2014 based on data from 51

Norwegian NSOs, the average representation of women directors was 37.4% (International

Working Group on Women and Sport, 2016c). In terms of representation of women directors

in sport governance Norway was placed second highest in the list of 38 countries on the

Sydney Scoreboard global index for women in sport leadership.

In 2016, FIFA, one of the most influential global sport organisations, voted to replace the

current executive committee with a new 36 member council that included a gender quota

(FIFA, 2016). The statutory reform stated that the members of each confederation must

ensure that they elect at least one female member to the council. There are six confederations

which means that a minimum of six of the 36 members or 16.7% must be women. This is an

improvement on women's representation in its leadership, however from 4% in 2014 to

16.7% in the new council means that gender balance will not yet be achieved. The IOC,

another influential and prestigious global sport organisation, has also used positive action to increase women's presence on boards of Olympic bodies. In 1996, the IOC adopted targets for women's representation on executive committees of National Olympic Committees and those International Sport Federations that are part of the Olympic movement (Henry et al., 2004). The targets were for women to occupy a minimum of 10% of executive positions by the end of 2001, increasing to a minimum of 20% by the end of 2005. A key finding of research (Henry et al., 2004) into the success of these targets is that they have had a clear positive impact on raising awareness of gender inequities and bringing talented women into Olympic executive positions. Nevertheless, the targets were not achieved since, overall, women's presence on executives of NOCs had only risen to 17.6% and on IFs to 18.3% in 2009 (Henry & Robinson, 2010). Some continents achieved better women's representation on its NOC executive committees than others. The average women's presence on NOCs was well below the target of 20% in Asia (12.5%) and Europe (14.1%), while Africa (19.5%) was close to the target. By contrast, NOCs in both the Americas (20.5%) and Oceania (26.1%) exceeded the target. Researchers attributed this higher level of women's representation to the fact that NOCs in Oceania had been established relatively recently and thus were less influenced by traditional patterns of male domination in sport governance. In relation to the IFs, women's overall representation (18.3%) is actually skewed by the presence of a small number of women – sometimes only one – on some small boards. Therefore the results are even more sobering; more than half (55.3%) of the IFs had only one or no women executives.

Regardless of whether or not the target was achieved, it should be noted that, in terms of gender balance, a target of 20% is very modest; a minimum of 40% is usually regarded as a measure of gender equity. There were no penalties or sanctions for failing to achieve the targets. Unlike quotas, they were not compulsory or legally binding. Henry and Robinson

(2010) concluded that even those NOCs and IFs that had achieved the minimum target had not necessarily adopted new policies which would enhance women's participation in sport organisations. This raises another important issue, namely, that the adoption of targets and quotas is not necessarily sufficient to achieve true gender equity in the governance of sport. This requires transcending numbers and ensuring that women and men exercise equal influence in strategic decision-making and resource allocation. The next section further explores this issue in relation to the impact of gender quotas, including the issue of how we can ensure sustainable change to gender equity.

The Impact of Gender Quotas

A recent study examined the impact of gender quotas on gender equity in the governance of National Sport Organisations in Australia (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014). It was part of a larger study into gender dynamics on boards of these organisations. The theoretical concept of a *gender regime* (Connell, 2009) was central to the study. A gender regime refers to a pattern of gender relations characterised by four interwoven dimensions of social life: production relations, power relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations. According to Connell, the first dimension - production relations – is about the way in which production or work is divided along gender lines. In the context of sport governance, it involves the way in which roles and tasks are allocated to men and women on the board. The second dimension, power relations, refers to the manner in which power, authority and control are divided along gender lines. In sport governance, this relates to who exerts influence on the board and makes important decisions. As previously discussed, men often outnumber and outrank women on sport boards and therefore wield more power and influence. The third dimension of a gender regime is emotional relations, which refer to attachment and antagonism between people along gender lines. In the case of sport boards, this concerns

patterns of attachment and hostility between and among men and women board members.

This can be observed when, for example, they support or, alternatively, undermine each other

in their work. The fourth dimension, symbolic relations, involves the prevailing beliefs and

attitudes about gender. In the realm of sport governance, this refers to the way in which men

and women understand and value gender and gender equity. It includes board members'

beliefs about gender equity and the use of gender quotas. An overview of the four-

dimensional gender model applied to the context of sport governance is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Four-dimensional gender model applied to sport governance

Gender dimension	Application to sport governance
Production relations	How roles and tasks are allocated to men and women on the board
Power relations	How power, authority and control are divided between and among men and women board members
Emotional relations	Patterns of attachment and hostility between and among men and women board members
Symbolic relations	How men and women understand and value gender and gender equity

Although these four dimensions can be examined separately for heuristic purposes, it is

important to emphasise that they are interwoven and constantly interact with each other.

Overall, the four dimensions produce a gender pattern or regime which provides a better

understanding of how gender works in organisations or on a board. Further, it allows an

analysis of the prospects for gender equity in the organisation or, in this case, the governance

of a sport organisation (Connell, 2005; Schofield & Goodwin, 2005).

The study investigated the gender regime on boards of three Australian NSOs which had adopted gender quotas that were specified in their respective constitutions. Board D was the national governing body of a popular non-Olympic individual and team sport. Using the four-dimensional model, Adriaanse's and Schofield's (2014) analysis showed that this board represented a gender regime that could best be characterised as one of *masculine hegemony*. It had introduced a gender quota of one, which meant that at least one director must be male and at least one female. There were seven male and two female directors on the board. In terms of production relations, men assumed most of the tasks because they were in the majority. Men also prevailed in power relations because they occupied the most influential positions, such as president and chief executive. In terms of emotional relations, men and women worked cooperatively and there was no evidence of explicit affection or hostility between them. In terms of symbolic relations, most directors understood gender equity as providing equal opportunity for all. Interviews with the board members disclosed that several male directors did not agree with the use of gender quotas. One male director said: "There should be more (women)…(but) it shouldn't be mandated…I am not interested in 'you must have that and you must have (this)'". They stated that the lack of gender balance on the board was mainly because not enough women were willing to 'step up' and be nominated for leadership positions. One of the women directors commented that women often lacked governance skills and experience. The board agreed that gender inequity was essentially a problem within women themselves. The chief executive, nevertheless, felt that the board had an obligation to actively address the issue. Given that he was a minority of one, the prospects for achieving gender equity on this board were very limited.

Board C was the Australian governing body of a popular Olympic individual sport. The gender relations on this board shaped a gender regime of *masculine hegemony in transition*

(Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014). The constitution included a gender clause of a minimum of

two directors of each gender. At the time of the study the board consisted of four men and

two women; therefore women's representation was 33%. Production and power relations

were dominated by men because they outnumbered women, assumed the majority of tasks

and had a strong influence in the decision-making process. An interesting dynamic emerged,

however, because a woman occupied the president's role and she was committed to

promoting gender equity in the sport. In terms of emotional relations, she was strongly

supported by a close group of two directors and the male chief executive. On the other hand,

she was fiercely resisted by one male director who felt that she was not a good leader due to

her uncompromising rational approach and her lack of knowledge of the sport itself.

Regarding the symbolic relations, there was ambivalence about the gender quota clause. Most

directors felt that getting the "best" people on the board had priority over achieving a gender-

balanced board. One male director said: "I just believe you get the best people, whoever the

best people are, that's what you need for the organisation." On the other hand, the chief

executive strongly supported gender balance by arguing that the presence of more diverse

perspectives would actually enhance the board's decision-making and problem-solving

capacity. Overall, as in the previous gender regime, prospects for gender equity on this board

were limited, but could be viewed more positively mainly due to the influence of the female

president and the supportive attitude of the chief executive.

Board E was the governing body of a prominent Olympic team sport in Australia. The

gender regime on this board was characterised as one of *gender mainstreaming in progress*

(Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014*).* The gender quota set for this board was a minimum of three

members of each gender. There were nine directors, six men and three women, or a 33%

representation of women. Although men dominated production and power relations merely

through numbers, the minority of three women had significant influence through their

specific portfolios, which included finance and high performance. The women were strongly

supported in their role by the chair and the chief executive, both of whom were male. It was

evident that the emotional relations among board members were supportive and

collaborative; the board formed a cohesive team. In terms of symbolic relations, none of the

directors expressed resistance to the gender quota clause. They were committed to gender

equity. The CEO said: "The organisation...very much embraces the ethos of equality across a

whole range of areas, and that is true for the board as well." Directors also understood that

gender equity needs to go beyond gender balance in numbers on the board. They mentioned

that it involves equitable contributions and participation by men and women at every level of

the sport. As one of the women directors explained, it meant considering a gender

perspective on all issues such as board composition, policy development and resource

allocation, which reflects a gender mainstreaming approach (Rees, 2002). Gender equity had

not yet been achieved but, in comparison with the previous two sport boards, this gender

regime demonstrated conditions that were the most conducive to accelerated positive change.

The key finding of the study was that a quota of a minimum of three women was fundamental

for advancing gender equity in sport governance. It is important to emphasise that a

minimum percentage is insufficient; the quota needs to extend to specify a minimum number

of three. Both boards C and E had 33% women's representation but only Board E had three

women members. It was this, I argue, that contributed to its ongoing gender regime of gender

mainstreaming with its promise of advancing gender equity. This finding supports other

research in corporate governance which found that the appointment of three or more women

is necessary to form a critical mass which is essential to change boardroom dynamics

(Konrad, Kramer, & Erkut, 2008; Torchia et al., 2011). The study also showed that the

establishment of a quota with a minimum of three was only the first condition for advancing

gender equity. In relation to the four-dimensional gender model, the other conditions were: i)

board members' understanding of and commitment to gender equity across all activities of

the sport organisation (symbolic relations); ii) the allocation of women directors to key

portfolios or roles on the board (production and power relations); and iii) a collaborative,

supportive environment among board members (emotional relations).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the use of gender quotas to improve gender equity in sport

leadership, in particular in the governance of national sport organisations and international

federations. Gender quotas are often introduced after other initiatives have failed to achieve

gender equity as seen, for example, in the Norwegian case study discussed above (Torchia et

al., 2011). Establishing quotas, however, is controversial. Proponents argue strongly that

quotas are an effective strategy for identifying and promoting talented women, which benefits

the organisation. Opponents, including some women, are equally passionate in their view that

quotas undermine appointments based on merit. The study of boards of Australian sport

organisations provides evidence of this ambivalence towards gender quotas; while some

board members (on Board E) embraced this measure, others (on Boards C and D) clearly did

not.

Several global initiatives other than quotas have been introduced to address gender equity in

sport leadership. The first international declaration to advance women and sport – the

Brighton Declaration, which was updated in 2014 to the *Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration*

and signed by more than 400 organisations worldwide – includes a clause on increasing the

number of women in sport leadership positions (International Working Group on Women and

Sport, 2016b). Another key initiative was the publication and wide distribution of the UN

document *Women 2000 and Beyond: Women, Gender Equality and Sport* (United Nations

Division for the Advancement of Women, 2007*)*. It emphasised the need to address the

under-representation of women in decision-making bodies of sport organisations from local

to international level and included a range of recommendations on ways of achieving gender

equity in sport leadership. Despite these important initiatives, data from the Sydney

Scoreboard show that gender equity has not yet been achieved. Although considerable

progress has been made, women remain markedly under-represented: none of the three key

indicators of women's participation – as directors, chairs and chief executives - has yet

reached 40%. The introduction of targets to improve gender balance in sport governance has

had limited success due to the voluntary nature of this strategy. This was evident when the

use of gender targets for Olympic governing bodies was evaluated (Henry et al., 2004; Henry

& Robinson, 2010).

The limited progress made so far suggests that the use of gender quotas warrants

consideration as a strategy to accelerate women's representation in sport governance. But do

they work?   A key finding of a study into the impact of quotas on gender equity in Australian

sport was that a minimum of three women who made up a third or more of board members

contributed to gender equity. However, this is only a first step because quotas needed to

operate with other gender dimensions to move towards gender equity, that is, equal

participation by men and women in board decision-making. Based on the four-dimensional

gender model (Connell, 2005; Connell, 2009), the other conditions were: adopting gender

equity as an organisational value by all board members; sharing of influential roles on the

board, with both men and women taking responsibility for significant portfolios; and creating

a cohesive, supportive team of board members. Overall, gender quotas are best perceived as

part of a suite of strategies to achieve gender equity in sport leadership. International declarations and publications on women, sport and gender equity are valuable in creating awareness of and sensitivity to the issue, but it is clear that additional efforts are required to achieve equal participation by men and women on sport boards. Gender quotas can add value and work effectively provided they occur in conjunction with the other three conditions on the board. Ultimately, when gender balance in the composition of the board is achieved, global sport governance can reach its full potential.

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