SPORT GVP
Gender Violence Prevention in & through sport

Building Sustainable Partnerships for Long-Term Change

Introduction

Addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in sport requires more than isolated interventions; it calls for sustainable partnerships that create long-term cultural change. Sport is not only a site of competition but also a powerful platform for shaping values, building communities, and challenging deeply rooted social norms. Establishing sustainable partnerships—between sport organisations, policymakers, educators, and communities—is critical in preventing violence, promoting equality, and creating safe spaces where all individuals can prosper (IOC, 2016).

Visibility and Awareness Raising: Putting GBV in the Spotlight

The foundation of building sustainable partnerships is making GBV in sport visible and impossible to ignore. Thus, the influence of sports extends far beyond the boundaries of the organisation itself. Capitalising on the popularity of athletes and sporting events offers a powerful platform to challenge harmful social norms and promote respect (UN Women, 2024). This includes:

- Raising awareness of the unacceptability of GBV.
- Collaborating with community-based initiatives to address and dismantle stereotypes, discrimination and harmful norms.
- Involving athletes and other prominent figures as role models in prevention strategies.

Collaborating with local and global networks can amplify these efforts, demonstrating the shared responsibility of the sports community in driving societal change.

The Sport GVP project stresses that visibility and awareness are essential for mobilising action and inspiring collective responsibility (Sport GVP Project, 2025a). Sport professionals, coaches, and leaders are not only guardians of performance but also educators and role models. Their voices carry influence in dismantling harmful stereotypes and reshaping environments into safe, inclusive spaces (Sport GVP Project, 2025b).

The visibility agenda is best advanced through a comprehensive approach (detailed review is available in SportGVP Project guide, 2025a):

- **Digital Media Campaigns**: Social media provides a unique platform to amplify survivor stories, share infographics, and showcase organisational commitments to safe sport. Hashtags like *#SportGVP* or *#PreventingViolenceInAndThroughSport* unify campaigns, while partnerships with athletes and influencers who advocate for a safe sports environment can further amplify the message. Dedicated websites and newsletters further act as hubs for resources, reporting mechanisms, and success stories.
- **On-Site Campaigns**: Face-to-face engagement remains irreplaceable. Workshops, seminars, and Safe Sport Days help communities confront GBV directly (ie. Policy Roundtable: Towards a Safer Playing Field – Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Sport organised by UNESCO in 2024, or the Workshop on Safeguarding in Sports, both organised by UNESCO in 2024 and 2025 respectively). These events not only raise awareness but also empower athletes and parents with practical tools to recognise and respond to violence (Mountjoy et al, 2016).

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- **Community Engagement**: Awareness becomes sustainable when rooted in community partnerships. Schools, grassroots clubs, and local NGOs can adapt messages to cultural contexts, ensuring relevance and impact (UNESCO, 2020).
- **Educational Programmes**: Structured lesson plans, as outlined in the Sport GVP Toolkit, provide opportunities to confront stereotypes, practice bystander interventions, and reflect on how GBV affects athletes' mental health, performance, and dignity.

Awareness raising is not a one-time campaign; it is a process of reshaping culture. By making GBV visible, organisations help break the silence, reduce stigma, and normalise the idea that violence has no place in sport (UN Women, 2023).

Building Sustainable Partnerships

Partnerships for long-term change must go beyond visibility. They need to be strategic, inclusive, and resilient:

1. **Institutional Partnerships**
   Collaborations between sport organisations and policymakers ensure that anti-GBV measures are embedded in law and policy. For example, EU directives and the Istanbul Convention establish a clear legal framework that organisations can align with, creating consistency across countries (Council of Europe, 2011).
2. **Cross-Sector Collaboration**
   Sustainable change happens when sport connects with education, healthcare, law enforcement, and advocacy networks. By engaging mental health professionals, legal aid providers, and crisis centres, partnerships create comprehensive support systems for survivors (Sport GVP Project, 2025b).
3. **Capacity Building Within Sport**
   Internal partnerships—such as establishing "experts' teams within the team"—equip clubs with trained advocates who act as first responders, mentors, and educators (Sport GVP Project, 2025a). This approach embeds expertise directly into organisational culture, ensuring continuity even when leadership changes.
4. **Community-Based Partnerships**
   Localised efforts are crucial. Working with schools, youth groups, and grassroots clubs ensures that awareness reaches the youngest athletes and filters upward. Community voices also keep interventions culturally sensitive and responsive (UN Women, 2020).
5. **Global and Regional Networks**
   Joining campaigns such as *HeForShe* or collaborating with organisations like UNESCO and UN Women extends impact beyond local contexts, connecting sport to global movements for equality.

Monitoring and Sustaining Change

Partnerships are only sustainable if progress is monitored and evaluated. Collecting data on awareness campaigns, reporting mechanisms, and training outcomes allows organisations to identify gaps and

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refine strategies and policies (UN Women, 2024). At the same time, sports organisations must address gender-based cyberviolence. Policies should include measures to combat online harassment, cyberstalking, and the non-consensual sharing of images.

Collaboration with social media platforms and tech companies can help ensure the swift removal of harmful content and provide victims with resources (Spurek & Riba i Giner, 2023).

Equally important is moral leadership. Leaders who commit publicly to zero tolerance of GBV and model respectful behaviour set a powerful precedent. By doing so, they transform awareness from an abstract goal into action in practice (Sport GVP Project, 2025b).

Conclusion

Building sustainable partnerships for long-term change means weaving together visibility, awareness, and structural reform. By putting GBV in sport firmly in the spotlight, organisations break the silence that has too long protected harmful behaviours. Yet, awareness alone is not enough—it must be anchored in cross-sector partnerships, institutional commitments, and grassroots engagement.

The Sport GVP project demonstrates that when sport embraces its potential as a platform for equality, it can challenge stereotypes, empower marginalised voices, and safeguard future generations (Sport GVP Project, 2025a; Sport GVP Project, 2025b). Sustainable partnerships ensure that this transformation is not temporary but enduring. They foster a sporting culture where inclusion, dignity, and respect are not aspirational ideals but everyday realities.

Actionable Recommendations

To move from awareness to sustainable change, sport organisations and their partners should:

1. **Launch joint awareness campaigns** combining digital platforms with on-site events to reach both global audiences and local communities.
2. **Create "expert teams within teams"**—designated GBV-trained staff or volunteers who can act as first responders and advocates inside clubs and federations.
3. **Institutionalise peer education programmes** that empower athletes to challenge stereotypes, support teammates, and normalise conversations about respect and equality.
4. **Establish clear monitoring systems** with regular reporting, survivor feedback mechanisms, and transparent evaluation of policies and campaigns.
5. **Engage with cross-sector and global networks** to ensure that local initiatives are supported by broader movements, funding, and shared expertise.

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