Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity

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“Score a goal for gender equality”

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“Score a goal for gender equality”

Saeanna Chingamuka

abstract

From 11th June to 11th July 2010, South Africa hosted the FIFA World Cup. For years, the country prepared to host the mega-event in a process that included building new stadiums, improving infrastructure, enhancing transport systems and beautifying cities. Moreover, the whole region readied itself with the expectation that tourists to the southern part of Africa would take the opportunity to stay a while and enjoy the region’s many tourist treasures. However, in much of the public and media discourse around the 2010 FIFA soccer tournament linking social development and economic empowerment to the event, a crucial part of the equation was missing, viz. a gender perspective. This Reportback reports on the campaign by Gender Links during the FIFA soccer tournament. The Campaign used sport to raise awareness on women’s rights during the period before and after the FIFA World Cup.

keywords

FIFA World Cup, Gender Links, trafficking, sex work, SADC Development Protocol, media, informal traders

Gender Links (GL) and its unit the Gender and Media Diversity Centre (GMDC) launched a campaign titled “Score a goal for gender equality” on 10 December 2009. The campaign was the basis of the initiatives undertaken by GL to use sport to raise awareness on women’s rights during the period before and after the FIFA World Cup.

The date is significant on the international calendar as it is International Human Rights Day and is also a date which marks the end of the 16 Days of Activism against gender violence. Parallel launches of the campaign occurred in Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Background

Soccer and the World Cup are seen internationally as falling within a male-dominated and regulated sphere. Across the southern African region, women are rarely encouraged to participate and are often seen as intruders into this space. This can be seen in the way women are discredited as ‘fake’ supporters and men as ‘genuine supporters’ of the Game (Rubin, 2009). Although FIFA does host a Women’s World Cup (to be held in Germany in 2011), this does not transpire with the ardour of the Game in 2010 and is not a worldwide spectacle.

As a consequence of the number of soccer fans, players and tourists visiting the country, the World
Cup preparations also generated concern among organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that the World Cup would mark an increase in the number of trafficked persons to southern Africa as well as an increase in sex work, posing potential risks for women and girls.

The World Cup clearly posed the possibility that women’s rights would be breached as a result of their exclusion and marginalisation from the male-dominated FIFA tournament. While it was said that the games presented great prospects as the first World Cup to be hosted in Africa, the differential opportunities that it offered to women and men were neglected. An inclusion of women must recognise that women play soccer and are football fans. Women are informal market and street vendors and small-business owners. They can transform their houses into guest houses, their cars into taxis, and offer their services as tour guides (Mushinge, 2009). They are artisans and craft makers. They fight for change and democracy. They spearhead development projects and are community organisers.

GL has developed a media and diversity programme that publishes and generates women’s media products as part of its work in building gender equality (see www.genderlinks.org.za) and acknowledged that if the positive representation of women during the World Cup was to be achieved, then it had a role to play in 2010 in producing numerous stories by and about women. These would not perpetuate negative gender stereotypes or solely pronounce on activities such as sex work. Part of the Campaign was to ensure these stories were told, and to raise our voices. and to take hold of the gender issues ourselves.

SADC Protocol on Gender and Development

GL has been a leading advocate of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development (2008) adopted by the heads of state of the 15 members of the SADC. The Protocol comprises 28 substantive time-bound targets to be achieved by 2015 and it forms the basis of many GL initiatives including the “Score a goal for equality” Campaign. The table below outlines some of the Protocol provisions that informed the GL interventions before, during and after the FIFA World Cup.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The SADC Gender Protocol and Soccer 2010:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Among its several provisions the SADC Gender and Development Protocol (2008) commits member states to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review national trade and entrepreneurship policies, to make them gender responsive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review, amend and enact laws and policies that ensure women and men have equal access to wage employment in all sectors of the economy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Enact and adopt specific legislative provisions to prevent human trafficking and provide holistic services to the victims, with the aim of re-integrating them into society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Take measures to promote the equal representation of women in ownership of, and decision-making structures of the media, in accordance with Article 12.1 that provides for equal representation of women in decision-making positions by 2015.</td>
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With these goals in mind, 2010 proved to be an ideal opportunity to assure that all SADC countries remained accountable to the defined protocol. For the FIFA 2010 World Cup, GL, the GMDC and partners attempted to assess some of the following issues:

• The potential role of the FIFA Soccer World Cup 2010 in advancing gender equality
The role of local government in ensuring that women have access to and participate in all sectors that relate to the Soccer World Cup 2010
- Economic opportunities for women
- Human trafficking
- Sex work
- Gender Based Violence
- Women and sport
- Gender, media and sport

Objectives of the campaign
- Creating a space for participatory discussion and debate on gender, media, sport and 2010 in southern Africa.
- Connecting with communities, organisations and individuals around the problems and possibilities of Soccer 2010 for women.
- Developing a body of knowledge on how the FIFA 2010 World Cup can be used as a platform to advance the position of women in society.
- Developing pre-emptive strategies against women’s exploitation during Soccer 2010 and engaging to deal with such acts.
- Promoting media coverage on issues of gender, diversity and 2010.

Specific activities
GL implemented the following activities:
- Convened three seminars to discuss sex work, the role of community media in covering marginalised voices and ending human trafficking;
- Produced radio spots on human trafficking which were distributed to community radio stations in Southern Africa;
- Provided training to community radio stations on how they could cover events around soccer 2010 and subsequently published audio news produced by the trained journalists on the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary service platform;
- Produced two journals centred on gender and sports;
- Ran an Opinion and Commentary Service of stories centred on the mega-event.

Seminars
Seminars give citizens a platform to debate issues that are pertinent to development and ultimately women’s empowerment. A three-part seminar series was convened around sex work, FIFA World Cup and beyond. The first seminar held on 29th March 2010, was regional as it was hosted by GL at a time when journalism and media academics from SADC institutions had convened in Johannesburg to discuss the findings of the gender in media education research.

The question of the legalisation of sex work for 2010 attracted attention and debate in southern Africa. None of the countries in the region have legalised sex work and the profession itself is treated as a criminal offence. Discussions on legalising sex work for the World Cup and the mega-event was used to initiate debates around this issue. The issue of sex work still leaves many people uncertain about their position on the subject and the debate was divided between those who are for and those who are against the legalisation of the profession. Whilst those who support sex work argued from a rights-based approach, those who are against legalisation questioned if the selling of one’s body for income is really a fundamental human right.

The conclusion was that much work still needs to be done in order for citizens to understand sex work and for broad consensus to be reached on legalisation.
FlIFA World Cup, informal traders and community broadcasters

Myers (2010) argues that because of women’s marginalised status in most societies, the presence of community media that prioritises women’s concerns can make a positive difference to women’s status and welfare within the community. As it has been noted above, women contributed to the successful hosting of the World Cup. The GMDC identified this as an opportunity for community media to publicise how the mega-event would economically empower women before, during and after the games. In addition, it was an opportunity for community media to package unique content about the soccer tournament as the national broadcaster was the sole owner of the rights to broadcasts from the stadiums.

Notably, the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development stipulates:

that state parties shall by 2015 adopt policies and enact laws which will ensure equal access, benefits and opportunities for women and men in trade and entrepreneurship, taking into account the contribution of women in the formal and informal sectors (Gender Links, 2010).

In addition, state parties should ensure that measures are put in place to ensure that women benefit equally from economic opportunities, for instance, those presented by the FlIFA 2010 World Cup. The media project involved the participation of informal traders who had their stories to tell about the participation in the World Cup. One of the informal traders, Cecilia Dube, spoke about her disillusionment around the discourse of economic empowerment for all at a seminar hosted by GL on 3 May 2010 (http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/seminars).

Cecilia Dube: Voice of the voiceless women traders

Dube pointed out that informal traders are mostly women who are widows or divorcees who have walked out of abusive relationships. These women play a big role in sustaining the lives of their families and in addition extended family. Dube herself is a widow with a child who she is sending to school with money that she gets from selling pap and fat cakes. She lamented that whilst there are calls for “vukuzenzele”, which translates to “wake up and do something for yourself”, the city by-laws have not worked in favour of the informal traders.

“We are harassed by police and they use derogatory language such as usisi wamagwinya. There is great risk in this business because at times women carry tins with hot charcoals on their heads so that they can go and sit at some point and roast green mealies to sell. A mother will be a man and woman at the same time. In Africa, this leads to sex work. I was happy that South Africa was hosting the world cup. I thought it would bring something, but the by-laws are marginalising us. How do FlIFA authorities put laws in a place where they have never been? We helped build the stadiums and now the workers have gone. We are now an unwanted sight because the stadiums are complete. For us to trade, they are saying that we should apply but the forms are nowhere to be found. We are only asking for a slice of the cake, if not a crumb.”

Dube added that the phrase “informal trader” is not appropriate as both women and men are equal players in developing nations. Not all people can be formally employed and what
government should be doing is to provide capital and equipment and “we will show you how formal we are” said Dube.

She further pointed out that authorities should engage informal traders when they are putting in place by-laws so that the laws work for all.

Dube also narrated how one day they had seen 17 Mercedes Benz buses with FIFA VIP going to see Soccer City stadium, but the same people could not provide informal traders with simple tents. She ended her presentation with a plea to the government to recognise them. “2010 is here, feel it is what they are saying. I’m not feeling it”.

“Together we can end human trafficking”

June is Youth Month in South Africa, and a seminar was convened on 22 June 2010 to capture youth voices on how World Cup 2010 as a mega-event could be used to advance gender equality in South Africa. In particular, the seminar was held against the background that South Africa saw an influx of people coming into the country for the world-class high-profile event. However, not all visitors had their main agenda focused on the tournament. The World Cup was generally viewed as an event that had the potential of fuelling human trafficking and also the capacity of causing an increase in the numbers of these violations. The aim was to raise awareness amongst the youth, women and children who are the most vulnerable in society, to try and curb such violence against humanity. The GL produced radio spots which were launched in Orange Farm, an informal settlement outside Johannesburg. Different speakers from GL partner organisations highlighted the causes of human trafficking and the efforts they were making to conscientise society about the issue.

The Women in Law Southern Africa (WLSA) and Southern Africa Network against Trafficking and Abuse of Children (SANTAC) launched the “Red Light 2010 Campaign” in 2008 to guard against the potential impact of the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup on vulnerable women and children in southern Africa. Organisations working on human, women and children’s rights, human trafficking, gender based violence (GBV), HIV and AIDS joined the campaign to realise a common purpose. Focusing initially on the World Cup to highlight issues relating to trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children, the Campaign will continue to keep this important issue on the regional agenda up to 2011.

The Campaign was launched in 10 SADC countries between 2008 and early 2010 and included a strategic communications campaign. The communication strategy to raise awareness on human trafficking used key provisions of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development as the main framework and aimed to work with media, particularly community media (Gender Links, 2010). The “Red Light 2010 Campaign” partners, comprising GL, Community Media for Development (CMFD) Productions and the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF), supported by Oxfam GB, produced radio spots.

The radio spots titled “Together We Can End Human Trafficking” aimed to:
1. Raise awareness in communities around recognising, preventing, and reporting human trafficking especially during the World Soccer Cup and beyond.
2. Provide community radio stations with content to promote the coverage of human trafficking.
3. Expand partnerships and bring the voices and views of communities and people most affected by the consequences of human trafficking into the discussion and strategic interventions around human trafficking.
The radio spot sound bytes are accompanied with a guide for community radio presenters that continue to be relevant after the World Cup is over to raise awareness. Three two-minute spots addressed various aspects of human trafficking in English, Zulu, Sesotho, Afrikaans, and SiSwati for South African audiences. These have further been translated into Portuguese, French, Shangaan, Nyanja, Chichewa, Setswana, and Shona and are being distributed to stations across southern Africa.

The radio spots relate stories on the dangers of being forced into sex work, of how trafficking could be recognised and why community action and outreach can prevent human trafficking.

Wiring news from community broadcasting journalists
Thirteen journalists were trained on reporting on FIFA World Cup from a gender perspective. These journalists were mostly from community radio stations and had not received formal journalism or media education. They were eager to capture women’s voices and therefore went on a search to get these. They came up with stories around such themes as informal trade, alcohol abuse, safety in the fan parks, fears of terrorism, impact on education since schools closed in order to afford the event due attention and female fans. The stories were reported from a gender perspective – this meant that the journalists would source comments from an equal number of women and men so as to demonstrate the differential impact of an issue on both sexes.

Journals
Two journals on gender and sport were published between December 2009 and March 2010. These are Gender, media and sport and Gender and Soccer 2010 which were launched at the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York in March. Contributions were sourced from the SADC region. For the Gender, media and sport journal, GL put out a call for papers and contributors were invited to a Symposium held on 10th December 2009, to present their work. The papers were then collated and published in the journal. For the second journal, GL trained journalists from the SADC region on reporting on gender and economics. The journalists were then commissioned to source one story from South Africa and then write two other stories in their countries about gender and the World Cup. The stories covered sex work, trafficking and trade. The journals were distributed widely at conferences and to the general GL mailing list which has contacts from as far as India and the US.

Opinion and Commentary service
The Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service provides mainstream media with fresh perspectives on the news. Initiated in 2003, the Service aims to produce opinion pieces from writers across Africa on topical news items. These articles are integrated into various media sources and are uploaded onto the GMDC website for online viewing. This service provides an opportunity for contributors to speak their mind on a variety of relevant and often controversial subjects. This platform was used to publish stories around the World Cup in 2010. For instance the following story (http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/soccer-is-a-microcosm-of-our-society-2010-08-06) that I wrote offers my perspective on the World Cup Soccer as a spectator:

Soccer is a microcosm of our society
By Saeanna Chingamuka

South Africa is celebrating Women’s Month this August under the banner “Working together for equal opportunities and progress for all women: Forward to the decade of
African women”. Soccer is one sport which if looked at closely, embraces subtle inequalities which instead are a true reflection of societal relations between women and men.

Towards the beginning of the recent Soccer World Cup, when people were buying their vuvuzelas and flags, and trying to get their hands on last-minute tickets, I too decided to join in the spirit. So I went to one of Johannesburg’s malls and bought myself a small Spanish flag. I had boldly decided (in my head) that I was supporting Spain, but at the same time had to be discreet (out loud) in case the team of my choice did not perform.

Eventually I put the flag on my office desk and began to feel I was a part of history as Africa was hosting the global mega-event for the first time. I followed the games closely and was happy that my team played beautifully throughout. It was also an honour when a good sister’s hubby offered to take me to the Spain and Honduras game at Ellis Park stadium. I had a great time, being a female football fan amongst men, supporting my team of choice. And I began to feel I might be a part of history for another reason.

I had previously always dreaded going to stadiums, fearing the displays of machismo, and the public harassment from male fans who shout mocking remarks at female fans. On this particular day, though, I enjoyed every minute spent watching the game and the men sitting near me were quite respectful. For a moment I felt as if just maybe the most sexually divisive sport might be bridging the gender gap – it was maybe a World Cup of possibilities? That moment eventually faded.

Later, when Argentina played Greece, I was impressed by the fact that Desiree Ellis, former Banyana Banyana captain, was a soccer analyst on a South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) channel. She sat on the panel with the likes of Jay Jay Okocha (former Nigeria national team player) and Kevin Keegan (former England manager). She analysed the game well and her participation was a challenge to what had been the norm. To me this scenario set a precedent, telling us that women have a space in male soccer tournaments.

So, for this woman, as the 11th of July approached, I still maintained that Spain was going to take the Cup. And I was right. Interestingly, when the last 16 were playing, my little Spanish flag disappeared from my desk. A male colleague had decided that it should sit on his workspace because as a man he was a genuine supporter and to him I was a fake supporter.

And with this I realised that my dreams about gender harmony and soccer were far from reality.

As the pitch was cleared for the last time at the men’s World Cup, the under-20 women’s World Cup kicked off in Germany from 13 July. This is the World Cup that never was; that revealed that as much as both men and women may have enjoyed the men’s 2010 games, the same could not be said of the women’s game.

The 16 teams, two from each continent, played in almost empty stadiums. Where were our male colleagues when it came to women’s soccer? Apparently men still view women’s soccer as an unusual practice aimed at disrupting the masculine sporting space they hold so dear. In addition, there was erratic media coverage and
most of the games were only played late at night on local channels. Can only men make sport a world spectacle?

Ghana and Nigeria represented Africa at the U-20 Women’s World Cup. The Nigerian team, popularly known as the “Falconets”, sailed through to the finals and were eventually beaten by Germany. Theirs was the first African team to ever reach the final of any International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) World Cup tournament. Surely this was a cause for celebration in Africa, but you wouldn’t have known it from where I sat, wondering if a Nigerian flag would have been stolen if I’d propped it on my desk.

The Nigerian women’s team, just like the Ghanaian men’s team, gave Africans pride. But it appeared that only one team was able to unify a continent and bring different tribes and countries together. I thought we had progressed beyond this dichotomy.

And then, as if the empty stands and late-night TV time slot was not enough humiliation, a Nigerian company promised the Falconets US$250 for each shot they hit on target during the tournament. In total, the players were credited 46 shots and the team was awarded US$11,500 by the company. I found this a meagre gesture for a team in desperate need of resources, but more importantly for a team that made Africa proud. If this team of 22 players decided to share the money, it would not have gone very far, especially when you consider that The Netherlands – as the runner-up at the men’s World Cup – was reportedly paid US$24 million in prize money.

It seems soccer is a microcosm of male-female relations in our society.

No matter how many women cheered teams from the office, the stadiums or the comfort of their homes, soccer is still a masculine space and the men’s FIFA 2010 World Cup is its “natural” global sporting event.

Despite all my hopes for change at the beginning of this Soccer 2010 season, it seems ‘the beautiful game’ remains one sport that continues to perpetuate gender inequalities in a sphere which is still very much the preserve of men. Next time I might just leave my flag at home.

Conclusion

For GL, the FIFA World Cup held in South Africa provided an opportunity to discuss pertinent regional issues. Furthermore, the organisation managed to use the event to communicate important gender equality issues. The “Score a goal for gender equality” Campaign had been taken beyond the World Cup and will inform other activities in the future. For instance GL will extend the Soccer 2010 theme, and the SADC Gender Protocol targets, to the Sixteen Days of Activism (2010) with the theme: “Score a goal for gender equality: Halve gender based violence by 2015” which is also the main target around gender violence in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

Footnotes


References

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