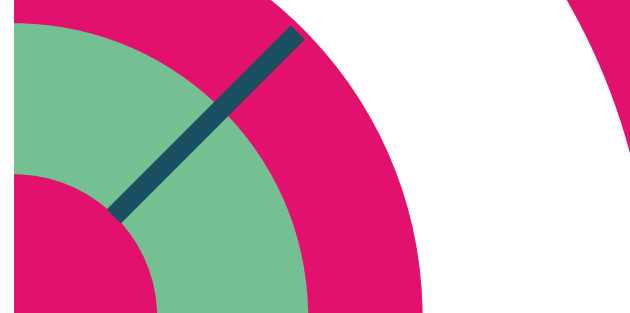
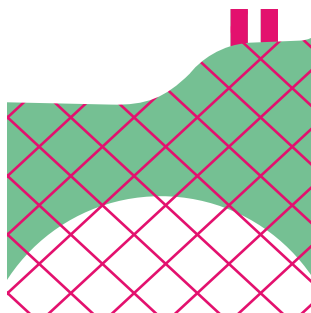
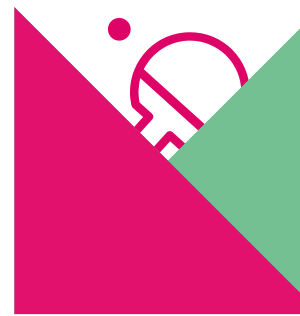




Gender-Responsive Sports Reporting Handbook

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of UN Women, the United Nations, or any affiliated organizations.

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PREFACE

PREFACE

The year 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of adopting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, one of the most significant historical and global frameworks for empowering women and girls. Since 1995, although substantial progress has been made across the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, the desired level of advancement has yet to be fully attained. Among these areas, media plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality and empowering women. In this context, sports media can take on a transformative role, contributing to the dissemination of an equality-oriented perspective.

Beyond being a field of physical activity, sport serves as a powerful tool for advancing gender equality. It offers significant opportunities to enhance women's leadership skills, increase their visibility, and inspire them through role models. All stakeholders within the sports ecosystem—athletes, coaches, institutions, and media professionals—can collectively build an inclusive and equitable sports environment.

In 2020, UN Women launched the global “Sport for Generation Equality Initiative.” The initiative’s “Sport for Generation Equality Principles” aim to empower women in sports and support sports institutions in fulfilling their social responsibility efforts.

Since 2018, the UN Women Türkiye Office has collaborated with Fenerbahçe Sports Club under the HeForShe Movement, supported by Tüpraş, making it one of the pioneering reflections of this initiative in Türkiye. This partnership provides a comprehensive model for transforming sports clubs toward gender equality, in line with the

“Sport for Generation Equality Principles.” In 2021, within this model, we developed the [“Guidelines for Gender-responsive Sports Organizations”](#) to assist sports ecosystem institutions in implementing gender-responsive practices.

Building upon these efforts, we have now prepared the Gender-Responsive Sports Reporting Handbook in alignment with the fourth principle of the Sport for Generation Equality Principles: **“to undertake efforts to promote women’s equal participation and bias-free representation in sports media, including communications to eliminate harmful gender stereotypes and promote positive role models.”** This handbook aims to serve as a resource that encourages women’s equal participation in sports media, challenges harmful stereotypes, and highlights positive role models.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Tüpraş, one of the largest industrial companies of Türkiye, and Fenerbahçe Sports Club for their valuable collaboration in realizing this endeavor. The contributions of these pioneering institutions, which believe in the transformative power of sports and advocate for gender equality, represent an essential step toward creating lasting and meaningful change within the sports ecosystem. We believe this joint effort will be an inspiring example of building a more inclusive and equitable future across sports and all areas of society.

Zeliha Ünal
Deputy Country Director
UN Women Türkiye Country Office



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Introduction

The Gender-Responsive Sports Reporting Handbook has been developed within the framework of the “**Advancing Gender Equality in and through Sports in Türkiye**” project, conducted by UN Women Türkiye under the HeForShe Movement, in collaboration with Fenerbahçe Sports Club and supported by Tüpraş. It draws upon international resources and data gathered from previously conducted gender-responsive sports reporting workshops.

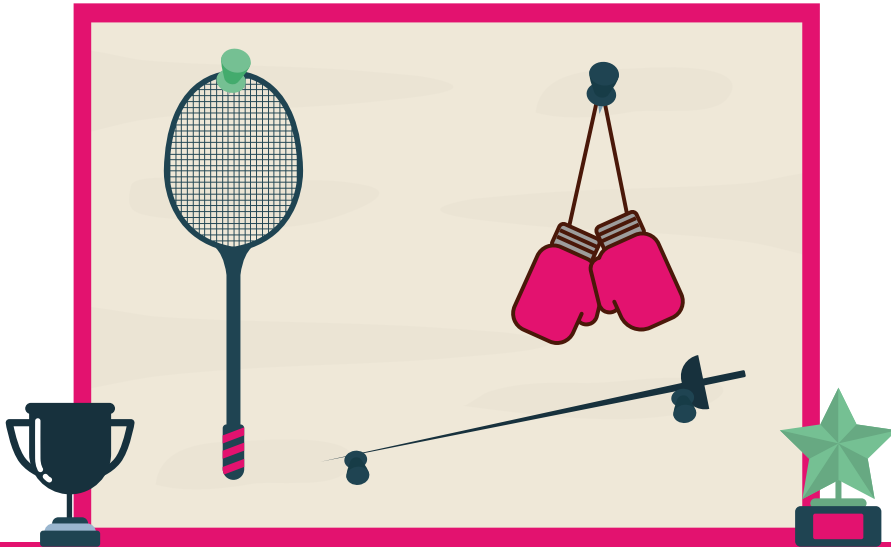
This handbook highlights the key elements of gender-responsive sports journalism for media professionals involved in or looking to pursue sports reporting.

The handbook provides guidance to media professionals engaged in sports reporting and serves as a reference for journalists, editors, presenters, graphic designers, and content creators across television, radio, digital media, and social media platforms.

It aims to raise awareness about gender equality in sports media and promote the dissemination of good practices.

This handbook is a practical guide that media professionals can easily keep on hand. It highlights key points in text boxes and is supported by checklists and actionable recommendations.

The sources forming the basis of the text body are provided at the end of the handbook for further reading.



Understanding Gender and Equality in Sports

Sports represent a significant area where advocacy for gender equality must be advanced. They provide a powerful platform for empowering women and girls while transforming gender norms and stereotypes towards equality. Accordingly, the way athletes are presented, described, visualized, depicted, and discussed across all media platforms holds national and international significance.

Women athletes should be highlighted not only for their physical appearance but also for their skills and achievements.

Towards Gender Equality

Women and men cannot be reduced to a single, uniform identity. Everyone's identity is shaped by various social determinants such as race, class, ethnicity, religion, nationality, culture, and sexual orientation. These factors influence individuals' experiences and the opportunities available to them within society. Therefore, it is essential to consider all aspects of identity when working toward gender equality. Goal 5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals¹ (Global Goals) aims to achieve gender equality and emphasizes that this requires efforts across public, private, and all spheres of life.

Sex:

Refers to the categorization assigned at birth, indicating a person's biological characteristics as female, male, or intersex (WHO, 2024).

Gender:

Refers to the cultural construct that emphasizes and enforces the societal roles of femininity and masculinity as defined by social order. Gender ensures the reproduction of male and female roles according to societal expectations (HÜKSAM, 2021).

Gender Equality:

Means that all individuals have equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities across all areas of public and private life. It encompasses full and equal participation in all fields, without discrimination and irrespective of individuals' biological sex. Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) ensures the recognition of human rights and fundamental freedoms based on the equality of women and men.

Gender stereotypes:

are generalized assumptions based on individuals' gender. These may originate from beliefs such as girls being expected to be delicate, sensitive, emotional, passive, and introverted, while boys are expected to be tough, strong, brave, and active (HÜKSAM, 2021). Negative stereotypes and discriminatory approaches contribute to gender inequality and hinder positive change (UN Women, 2020).

¹<https://turkiye.un.org/en/sdgs>

Amplifying Narratives on Gender Equality

Achieving gender equality is not solely dependent on the representation of women or men but also by transforming prevailing narratives. Language reinforces and perpetuates stereotypes about women and men. Therefore, adopting inclusive and non-discriminatory language, promoting egalitarian narratives, and altering stereotype-based stories are essential. Increasing diversity in language use, forms of representation, and media narratives constitutes a significant step toward achieving gender equality.



Reflect on the following:

What are some good and bad examples from the media regarding the distinction between sex and gender?



What gender-based expectations are placed on me in my life? How many of these relate to my biological sex?



How can I represent women and men equitably in sports reporting?



What steps can I take to promote gender equality?



Be inspired:
The power of stories

You can reflect on **gender**, **sex**, and **gender equality** by watching the digital stories² linked below...

What themes do you notice in these stories?

[Story 1](#)



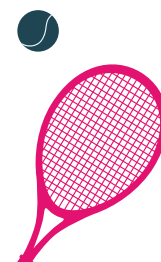
[Story 2](#)



² These digital stories were realized within the scope of the “16 Days of Activism for Combating Violence against Women” event conducted in collaboration with UN Women and Hacettepe University Department of Communication Sciences Digital Storytelling Workshop. For access to other digital stories in the “Orange Digital Stories” collection: <https://digitalstoryhub.org/filter/gender/Turuncu-Dijital-Hikayeler-Doyasiya-Kadiniz-Gonlumuzce-Variz>
<https://digitalstoryhub.org/filter/gender/Turuncu-Dijital-Hikayeler-Elinin-Hamuruyla-Adam-Gibi>

Gender-Responsive Sports Reporting

In the context of the relationship between gender, sports, and media, [the International Olympic Committee \(IOC, 2024\)](#) highlights three key issues:



Limited representation of women in sports:

Globally, the representation of women's sports and female athletes remains limited. Many resources and attention continue to focus on men's sports. Although efforts to bridge the gender gap are evident, it is still difficult to assert that gender balance has been achieved.

Invisibility of women:

There is a disproportionate focus on the off-field lives of female athletes (their appearance, clothing, and personal lives). These aspects overshadow their performances and talents. Women's sports are often introduced with qualifiers. For instance, football played by women is typically labeled as "women's football," whereas no such qualifier is used for men's football, which is a clear issue.

Focus on gender identity:

Unlike male athletes, female athletes are often primarily defined by their biological sex or gender identity (e.g., as wives, mothers, or feminine figures), pushing their athletic identity into the background. Highlighting their skills and achievements as athletes often remains secondary.

The choice is

yours!

News reporting is a process of selection. The media professional decides what constitutes news, how it is presented, and whose voices are included. In sports journalism, making these decisions with the public interest in mind is crucial to addressing inequalities.

Reflect on the following:

Which sports disciplines are most highlighted in the media? Why?

How is the newsworthiness of female athletes determined?

Various international sources (IJF, 2024; IOC, 2024) emphasize the following points regarding gender-sensitive journalism:

1. Language:

Gender-neutral language refers to using inclusive expressions that do not refer to one or another particular sex or gender (EIGE, 2018). Inclusive language avoids discriminatory expressions. It regards women and men as equals and contributes to reducing gender stereotypes (UN Women, 2017). Establishing a language free of discriminatory definitions and stigmatization is indispensable for gender-responsive sports journalism. However, in order to make the language of the news story inclusive, it is equally important to stop using sexist expressions that can be used in everyday life and work.

“

“Women are more than their gender, and men are more than just athletes. They are all people with full lives and diverse interests.”

(IOC, 2024, p. 13)

”

Language Use

Language can either support or hinder gender equality. It is crucial to ensure the language used in news reporting is inclusive.



What can I do?



Start from the point that sport is genderless.

✗ **Negative Example:** Women's football

✓ **Positive Example:** Football – Women's Team Matches or Football – Men's Team Matches

Remember that roles within sports media are not gendered.

Practical Tip: Use gender-neutral terms such as “camera operator” instead of “cameraman.”

Avoid attributing women's athletic achievements to traditionally male-coded physical strength.

✗ **Negative Example:** “The female Michael Jordan”

✓ **Positive Example:** “The strength of women in weightlifting”

Use gender-neutral adjectives instead of gendered descriptors based on physical characteristics.

✗ **Negative Example:** “She-tiger,” “like a girl,” “man-to-man competition,” etc.

✓ **Positive Example:** “Competing with determination,” “one-on-one competition”, etc.

2. Source Selection:

The media shapes perceptions of gender based on which voices are highlighted. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project³, women constitute only 24% of the individuals seen, heard, or mentioned in the news.

Pay attention to the following:



- Include female experts and not just male experts.
- Focus on the achievements of athletes rather than their personal lives.

Ask yourself:

When did you last feature a female expert in your reports?



³ Global Media Monitoring Project , 2020, <https://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-2020-final-reports/>

3. Usage of Visuals:

A single image can convey powerful messages at a glance. Therefore, selecting visuals carefully within a framework of gender equality is critical. Here are ways to use gender-responsive visuals in sports journalism:

What should you do?

- **Highlight the athlete's performance and skill.** The focus should not be on the athletes' physical attributes, men or women, but on their skills and efforts on the field.
- **Emphasize teamwork.** Use images that showcase collective efforts instead of focusing solely on individual athletes. Sport is about more than just individual achievement!
- **Maintain balance.** In your coverage, represent women and men athletes equally. Avoid featuring only one gender in the images you use.
- **Sport is for everyone!** Avoid visuals that suggest certain sports are only suitable for one gender. Show that everyone can succeed in any discipline.

What should you avoid?

- **Do not use visuals that reinforce gender stereotypes.** Instead of images that depict athletes solely by their gender or passively represent them, select images that reflect their performance, effort, and qualities as a role model.
- **Avoid images focused on the athlete's body.** Avoid objectifying athletes' bodies by focusing on specific body parts; instead, portray the spirit and energy of sports.



Be inspired

In collaboration with the Women's Sport Trust in the UK, Getty Images has created the **"Best of Women's Sport"** collection. This collection features dynamic images of the world's top women athletes (IOC, 2024, p. 14).

You can explore this at www.gettyimages.co.uk/resources/sportingwomen and adopt a gender-balanced approach in your visual content.

Quick Visual Selection Checklist:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ✓ Does the image highlight athletic performance? | ✓ Is teamwork and diversity emphasized? |
| ✓ Are women and men athletes represented equally? | ✓ Is the perspective sexist and stereotyped? |

4. Intersectionality:

Athletes differ not only in terms of gender but also by age, culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, expertise, appearance, and nationality. It is important to ensure that all these intersectionalities are represented when fostering role models.

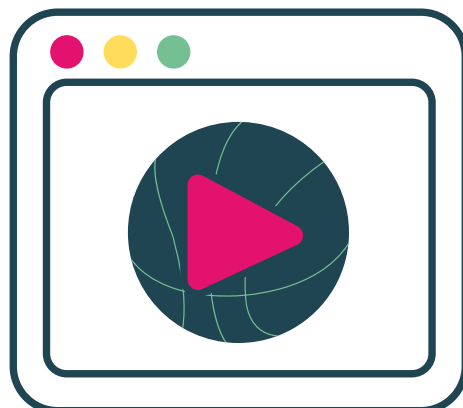
How can inclusive sports reporting be achieved?

What should you do?

- **Make diverse identities visible.** Highlight the achievements of minority groups, women athletes, and athletes with disabilities.
- **Cover diverse voices.** Create content highlighting the achievements of women athletes, minority groups, or athletes with disabilities.
- **Report stories that emphasize intersectionality.** Recognize that an athlete might face challenges not only due to gender but also because of factors like disability, refugee status, or age. Produce content taking all these factors into account.

What should you avoid?

- **Avoid relying on monolithic success narratives.** In sports journalism, focusing solely on male athletes or certain branches can make other groups invisible.
- **Do not perpetuate prejudices.** Refrain from perpetuating stereotypes such as “women athletes are emotional” or “older athletes cannot compete.”



Quick Intersectionality Checklist:

✓ Are athletes from diverse backgrounds featured in my reports?

✓ Am I highlighting the achievements of athletes with disabilities or from underrepresented groups?

✓ Am I using inclusive language and narrative?

✓ Am I reinforcing the message that sport is for everyone?



Be inspired

You can review the inclusivity practices of international sports organizations for good practices. The gender and equality policies of UN Women, the IOC, and the Paralympics can be a good starting point.

5. Reversibility:

Do not use language or expressions for women athletes that you would not use for male athletes. One of the most effective methods for gender-sensitive reporting is the **reversibility test**. Does the meaning change when you replace a women athlete in a news report with a male athlete or vice versa? If your story's tone, content, or emphasis changes, you may need to review the gender balance.



Be inspired

Recommended reading:

The story of Olympic athlete Eda Tuğsuz.

How can you apply this?

Ask equal questions.

Avoid asking women athletes personal questions that you would not ask male athletes.



Negative Example: "How does your private life affect your sports performance?"



Positive Example: "What is your biggest goal this season?"

Test the adjectives you use. Are you using descriptors like "strong, leader, warrior" for men and "gentle, determined, graceful" for women?

Check your headlines. Are you portraying women's achievements as "unexpected" or "surprising"? If you describe men's achievements as "well-deserved" and women's achievements as "unexpected," you must review your reporting.



Positive and Negative Examples:

-  **Wrong usage:** "The women's basketball team achieved an unexpected victory!"
-  **Equitable usage:** "Team X secured a significant win on their championship journey."
-  **Wrong usage:** "Young female athlete outpaced her male competitors."
-  **Equitable usage:** "Athlete X won the championship by surpassing her competitors."

Quick Reversibility Checklist:



Am I asking equal questions to women and men athletes?



Am I avoiding language that diminishes women's achievements?



Are the language and headlines free from gender stereotypes?



Am I applying the same standards of reporting for male athletes?

6. Representing Those Who Strive:

Winning and losing are both inherent parts of sports. What truly matters is effort and perseverance. Representing a particular gender solely as winners or losers may inadvertently reproduce gender stereotypes.

What should you do?

- Highlight the effort and performance. Share the stories of athletes who strive and persevere, not just those who win.
- Equally represent women and men athletes. If one gender is predominantly portrayed as “losers” or “unexpected winners,” reassess the perceptions.
- Do not measure success only by the number of medals gained or points scored. Sports encompass values such as perseverance, endurance, and teamwork. Make sure to highlight these aspects.

What should you avoid?

- Avoid focusing only on winners. Additionally, share the stories of athletes who have demonstrated growth and resilience.
- Do not categorize athletes based on their gender. Avoid language that portrays male athletes as “determined” and women athletes as “emotional.”



Be inspired

International sports organizations feature winners and athletes who have shown remarkable perseverance. You may refer to the IOC and the Paralympic Games' work on athlete storytelling.



Positive and Negative Examples:



⊗ **Wrong Usage:** “Surprising success from women athletes.”

✓ **Equitable Usage:** “Team X fought hard to reach the finals.”

Quick Checklist for Representing Those Who Strive:



Am I defining success solely based on the medals gained?



Am I giving visibility to the stories of athletes who show perseverance?



Am I equally representing the efforts of women and men athletes?



Am I narrating success not only through “victories” but also through effort and development?

Ask yourself:

What can I do in my job to help break gender stereotypes?



How can I contribute to making sports reporting more gender-responsive within my team?



Good Practice Example

Good Practice Example

Gender-Responsive Sports Reporting Collaboration with Fenerbahçe Sports Club Media Group

Gender-responsive sports reporting requires more than individual awareness; it necessitates institutional commitment. Achieving gender equality in sports media requires transforming content production processes and team structures.

To this end, basic principles for gender-responsive sports journalism were developed in workshops with employees of the Fenerbahçe Sports Club Media Group as part of the “Ensuring Gender Equality in and through Sports in Turkey Project,” implemented by HeForShe and Fenerbahçe Sports Club with the support of **Tüpraş**. Drawing from their experiences, participants established shared principles applicable both individually and institutionally.

- 1 Equal airtime and balanced rankings should be provided for women and men in sports reporting.
 - 2 An inclusive and egalitarian language should be used for all athletes, regardless of gender.
 - 3 Equal news coverage should be provided for amateur and professional sports branches.
 - 4 The same gender-responsive care should be extended to all branches of sports.
 - 5 Equality must be ensured in the representation of women and men athletes in social media content.
 - 6 Athletes of all ages and sports disciplines should be made visible as role models.
 - 7 The same camera angles should be applied to women and men athletes.
 - 8 Increasing the number of women working as content producers for news and social media in sports reporting should be supported and demanded.
 - 9 Women media professionals should be supported in pursuing roles beyond those traditionally assigned based on gender, such as presenter or anchor, including positions like camera operator, photographer, graphic designer, and social media content manager.
 - 10 Gender equality should be considered when selecting sources for news reporting.
-

Gender-Responsive Sports Reporting Checklist

The following checklist will assist you in evaluating how gender-responsive your sports reporting is. **The higher your number of “Yes” answers, the more inclusive your approach to journalism becomes.**

#	Statement	YES	NO
01	I provide equal airtime and balanced ranking for women and men athletes in sports reporting.	☐	☐
02	I use inclusive and egalitarian language for all athletes, regardless of gender.	☐	☐
03	I provide equal news coverage for amateur and professional sports branches.	☐	☐
04	I show the same gender-responsive care to all sports branches.	☐	☐
05	I ensure equality in the representation of women and men athletes in social media content.	☐	☐
06	I strive to make athletes of all ages and sports disciplines visible as role models.	☐	☐
07	I strive to use the same camera angles for women and men athletes.	☐	☐
08	I actively work towards increasing the number of women content producers in sports journalism.	☐	☐
09	I support women media professionals working in various roles beyond gender-stereotyped assignments, such as camera operators, photographers, graphic designers, social media content managers, etc.	☐	☐
10	I choose my news sources with attention to gender equality.	☐	☐
Total			

Result: The more “Yes” boxes you check, the more gender-responsive your sports reporting is. Congratulations!



Principles for Gender-Responsive Sports Reporting

Considering this handbook, identify three core principles you would like to implement in your field of work. In the context of your role in the media, write the principles in your own words that will enhance your gender responsiveness.



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REFERENCES

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UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead UN entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social behaviors and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations translate progress into lasting changes. We make strides forward for women and girls in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and women, peace and security as well as humanitarian action.

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the center of global progress—always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.



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