

Seal, E., & Sherry, E. (2018). Exploring empowerment and gender relations in a sport for development program in Papua New Guinea. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 35(3), 247-257.

What is it about? (Aim/objectives)

An evaluation of the Girls Empowerment through Sport (GET) programme offered as a development programme by Cricket Papua New Guinea (PNG) funded by the Australian's Government's Pacific Sports Partnership Scheme.

Where is it from? (Context/location)

Port Moresby, capital of PNG at local schools.

Who are involved? (Research participants)

The programme is managed by a partnership between Cricket PNG, ICC (South Asia Pacific) and the Australian Sports Commission. It is implemented for a term in once class per school to girls aged between 12 and 18 years. The programme entails six cricket sessions and six educational sessions over a term, followed by a cricket carnival as a round robin-style competition.

Form a local partnership with a local NGO (Coalition for Change) and activist group for gender equality and that lobbied for social justice and change the status quo of women in that society.

What are the readings and main concepts?

- The 'Girls' Effect movement' where girls act as catalysts for change.
 - In PNG about 90% of women in Port Moresby have been exposed to violence and suppressed rights, keeping them vulnerable and victims of gender-based violence and/or abuse.
- Empowerment and agency (being able to act and bring about change) within existing structural barriers (e.g. political, tribal-legal and socio-economic realities). Empowerment relates to local realities and has meaning when suppressive gender relations are disrupted and girls not only use their voices in a safe space, but act to claim their rights.

What are the main findings? (Results)

- The GET programme offered girls a safe space and created awareness of broader social issues (e.g. gender-based violence) and disrupted the norms of how girls should behave.
- Playing cricket (a traditionally male sport) created new identities and ways girls experience their bodies as strong and capable.
- Girls gained confidence and influenced their peers and family members to respect women's rights and change behaviours (e.g. expose abuse and have male siblings share domestic duties).
- Consciousness-raising of sexism and produce supportive networks for women and girls (e.g. local managers, instructors/coaches and participants).
- Indigenous knowledge was key in providing life lessons and address local gender issues.
- Empowerment for instructors meant acting as role models and oppose (also disrupt) traditional gendered relations that exists in sport and in the broader community.

What are the main lessons? (Discussion/Reflections/Learnings)

- A programme should not only focus on individual participants but challenge oppressive structures – in this case this was done by an activist NGO that could challenge discriminatory practices.
- The programme carried status because it was an initiative from the national cricket sport organisation.
- Employing and training female staff assisted girls and set an example within the realities that girls had to cope with and negotiate change.
- It was effective to use a male-dominated sport that could actively contest traditional expectations.
- There should also be a programme for boys led by gender-minded men – it is a societal issue not to be solved by women alone.

Is it useful? (Chat room, knowledge sharing)

- What does empowerment mean? Can girls and women really change (show agency) discriminatory structures and practices?
- In your context or realities were girls and women are oppressed, how would you go about to really empower them and address issues like gender-based violence?
- Do you know of sport federations or structures that implement such sport-for-development initiatives? If you do, what does it look like? If not, do you think they will partner with an NGO for such a programme?

