

2010 FIFA World Cup: Gender, politics and sport

Venitha Pillay and Elaine Salo

The euphoria of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa seems to persist, albeit as faded, scraggy remnants of flags hanging precariously on aerials and the side view mirrors of cars. The cacophony around this event has died. Shakira has left the stage. However the debates about the gendered impact of the FIFA World Cup still remain. This special issue of *Agenda*, maps out some of the key features of the debate, as we question whether women's participation in sport has been significant and whether international sporting events can make a substantive difference in women's lives.

In the last decade or so, South Africa has repeatedly revelled in having the world's gaze trained upon us. From the moment Mandela stepped out of prison and onto the world stage, as a country we captured the world's attention. And we loved it!! It was such a refreshing change from being the pariahs of the world. Shortly thereafter, we hosted the Rugby World Cup and won. Hollywood even made a movie, *Invictus*, that brought President Mandela and the Rugby World Cup into brilliant unison, as a visual tribute to the powers of reconciliation. Since these magical moments a number of mega international sporting events, such as the World Cup Cricket tournament, international golf, surfing and tennis matches have been held here. It seems we have become somewhat addicted to being the centre of attention on the global sports stage. In the

aftermath of the successful bid to host the FIFA World Cup, it seemed that the event would usher in a golden age of development for South Africans across race, gender and the urban – rural divide. And indeed, initially the promises of development seemed to be realised, as new jobs were created in construction, tourism and security. The president of FIFA Sepp Blatter, tied the staging of the mega soccer event integrally to a development agenda in South Africa and the continent. He claimed that the FIFA World Cup presented a

common ground for engaging in a wide range of social development activities, including education, health promotion, social integration and gender equity (Blatter, 2010).

South Africa's successful bid to host the 2010 Soccer World Cup has seen huge infrastructural investments. In the years and months preceding the World Cup national roads were improved, our city public rail systems, best exemplified by the Gautrain project, were constructed, or improved to facilitate easy access to stadiums, Fan Parks and city centres. Bold, beautiful new stadiums rose out of dry earth. Indeed, critics of the South African government's decision to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup, were quick to point out that in successfully meeting FIFA's conditions for holding this jamboree, through its massive financial, human and intellectual investment in it, the South



African government had demonstrated that it had the necessary resources and capabilities to prioritise the chronic poverty and service non-delivery endemic to most parts of the country (see *Solidarity News*, 2010, on the Durban Social Forum protest against the extravagant expenditure on the 2010 World Cup while the demands of the poor were ignored).

During the World Cup event, national and international fears about crime subsided, and the quintessential South African fear about the 'Stranger' or the 'Foreigner' seemed to have abated. People communicated across national, racial, religious and gendered divides, and South Africans took collective pride in our ability, our

sheer chutzpah in hosting this international event with success. Social interaction in the public sphere improved, the perennial electricity black outs ended, newspapers reported little crime, and the fears of xenophobic attacks and general criminality declined markedly. Indeed, South Africans from all walks of life and across the generational, cultural and gendered spectrum seemed to embrace each other and the international community as South Africa once again held the attention of the world.

The joy, elation and fervour of the moment seemed to be epitomised in the effervescent, omnipresent buzz of the vuvuzela. It seemed that, for a moment, the FIFA World Cup had helped us realise "A Better life For all". But did the 2010 FIFA

World Cup realise the promise of development for all in a substantive way? And can we look to these mega celebrations of masculine prowess in international sports in future, to impel economic and social development, and recognise the rights of the most vulnerable sectors of our population? This issue questions the gender impact of the FIFA World Cup and its benefits and consequences for marginalised sectors of South African women. We ask what difference the 2010 World Cup event has made in the lives of women sex workers, informal women street vendors and for raising the profile of women's sport. We use the FIFA World Cup as the organising trope, to reflect critically on a number of gendered developmental issues in South Africa. Authors, Chandre Gould, Marlise Richter and Dianne Massawe reflect on the gendered discourse of women-as-victims in the

and Regis Cherishe note the absence of women from representation in sporting structures and specifically the 2010 FIFA World Cup structures. Liane Loots and Harald Witt question what development took place in relation to the promise of an 'environmentally friendly' and 'gender equal' World Cup by FIFA. Urmilla Bob and Kamilla Swart offer new research on the 2010 World Cup Fan Parks and women as fans, cheerleaders and consumers during the World Cup.

Perhaps the most striking feature of what the world saw with respect to women, was that the World Cup would dramatically increase sex trade and human trafficking in the country. As Gould shows in the lead *Article* of this issue, the moral panic associated with major sporting events was eagerly taken up by the local and international media. In effect the gaze of women as hapless victims was again evoked, as it was in 2006 when the World Cup was held in Germany. That this did not actually happen as predicted in Germany, sounded no cautionary bells in South Africa. Indeed, in the early stages of planning for the event, the then Commissioner of Police, Jackie Selebi indicated that prostitution would be legalised for this period (*The Cape Argus*, 30 March 2007) and this was reinforced by an ANC MP, George Lekgetho, who announced to a Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Arts and Culture that legalisation of prostitution would be a way to reduce rape as men would have easier access to women (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7215962.stm>). Selebi, like most members of national government ignored the overwhelming research evidence demonstrating that rape is an act of power, through sexual means (see Chennells, 2009, in *Agenda* issue "Gender and the Legal System"). Yet Selebi's misguided, though popularly received argument, did not lead to the legalisation of prostitution, not even during the World Cup, nor did we see a moratorium on the arrest and harassment of sex workers. Regrettably, as Gould argues here, we witnessed

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conflation of sex trafficking and sex work and the agency of sex workers. Farieda Khan, Marizanne Grundlingh and Mari Engh recuperate women's historical participation in tennis and soccer, whilst asking critical questions about the fluid nature of femininity, sexuality and gendered identity. Adam Cooper discusses the innovative photo-methodology in recuperating girls' participation in soccer in a Western Cape township. Nora Wintour reflects upon the gains and challenges of street vendors' organising campaigns through StreetNet during the 2010 World Cup and the lessons learned. Janine Hicks offers a gender perspective on the 2010 FIFA World Cup to address the problems of gender inequality, flagging issues of public concern that arose that the hosts of future mega-events could well learn from. Newman Wadesango, Severino Machingambi, Gladys Ashu

a conflation of discourse, so that human trafficking was equated with sex work. Consequently the religious Right's moral opprobrium of sex work found purchase in the well-founded condemnation of human trafficking by social justice NGOs. The unintended support for the condemnation of sex workers' rights is due to our uncritical reflection at best, and ignorance at worst, of the longstanding arguments for the legalisation of sex workers. Sadly too, the South African government failed to ask why sex and male sports are necessarily twinned as inevitable concurrences. South African society assumes the 'natural right' of men to satisfy their apparent increased appetite for sex during sport. Yet we accept, uncritically, the 'right' to condemn some women's choice to sell sex, purely on moral grounds.

Continuing the debate on women sex workers' rights, Massawe and Richter asks whether the soccer bonanza brought any relief to these workers. They show that ironically, despite the massive hype around human security, trafficking and crime preceding the World Cup, that Government did nothing to prevent abuse of sex workers. They describe a well co-ordinated campaign by civil society organisations, including the Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT), and the Women's Legal Centre, appealing to the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development and the Minister of Safety and Security to call a moratorium on arrests related to sex work during the World Cup. Despite a well-reasoned argument pointing to the benefits of such a moratorium, their appeal was met without a response from the State. Instead, sex workers tell of police catching them and forcing them to have sex, of being arrested because they were dirtying South Africa and therefore discouraging visitors from coming here. Clearly, the much published concern for the safety of women, and of soccer fans generally, did not extend to sex workers. Their *Reportback* raises the question about whom the State, the National Organising Committee of

the World Cup, and FIFA consider as economic and social participants and beneficiaries worthy of protection during the soccer extravaganza. It also emphasises a glaring gap in the research on the economic contributions of sex workers to the gross income earned during mega-events such as the World Cup. Hicks's *Perspective*, written from within the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), provides a considered assessment of the World Cup's gendered developmental agendas, from a policy perspective. She indicates that the gendered policies are myriad, ranging from sex workers' rights, to trafficking, prevention of gender based violence, media coverage, legacy projects and women's economic empowerment. Her *Perspective* indicates that the policies and practices needed to ensure an effective developmental agenda should have been reiterative throughout government structures and well co-ordinated with the FIFA agenda. In addition, she recommends that the state's commitment to the gender agenda should continue even after the final whistle has blown. She indicates that if an effective gender agenda is to be realised as an outcome of mega sporting events, then careful attention needs to be paid to policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

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Cooper, Engh, Grundlingh and Khan collectively examine the marginalisation of women's sport as well as the possible research methodologies and practices in recuperating and celebrating this gendered participation. In a similar vein, Wadesango *et al*, examine the reasons for women's glaring absence from sport administration on the continent and in the FIFA World Cup. The articles contribute to the debates about hegemonic masculinity, the dominant constructions of femininity in women's

sport, and the debates about sexuality and women athletes' respectability. Sepp Blatter, graciously conceded that women's soccer would be a good thing and that women soccer players should dress in more feminine clothes like "tighter shorts" (*The Guardian*, 16 January 2004). The contradictions between the calls to preserve women's morality through concern about human trafficking and Blatter's opinion of soccer offer some possible explanations why women's sexuality remains sport for men. In effect, the world's gaze and our own gendered gaze of the World Cup entrenched the pervasive sexualisation of sport. In her *Focus* on women soccer teams at Stellenbosch University, Grundlingh shows that women soccer players tell a different tale. While there is deep awareness of the masculinisation of soccer, the women soccer players she interviews talk of their love for the

the debates about the bodily aesthetics and embodiment of women's soccer. Wadesango *et. al* critically apply the concept hegemonic masculinity to explain women's absence from soccer and general sports administration. They argue that ultimately the invisibility of women from decision-making structures in sport results in a societal cost, especially in terms of women's health, well being and blatant disregard for women's human rights.

Cooper's *Profile* shifts our focus from the national to the profoundly local meanings of women's sport in an impoverished setting. Here he resets the gaze of the world and of South Africans' on the reinvented meanings of the World Cup in a local township and the powerful meaning of women's sport here. Cooper writes of a research project which aims to bring words and pictures together into a story of soccer by school learners in their neighbourhood in Cape Town. His innovative use of photography as methodology to re-vision young women's and men's perceptions of community life, shows the promise of effective means to surface women's participation in sport. What emerges most in this *Profile* is young women's participation in sport to expand the limit of the often suffocating femininities in poor townships, whilst recuperating a positive sense of place on the margins. His *Profile* argues for the use of women's soccer as a means of recuperating normality in an often violent setting. Reading soccer from the peripheries of marginalised youth in impoverished townships, he reframes development in a more organic, agentic manner.

Bob and Swart, and Witt and Loots, in their respective *Articles* in this issue, foreground the economic aspects of the World Cup in relation to equality and economic participation as well as environmental sustainability. Bob and Swart's *Article* emphasises women's participation in the World Cup as fans, revealing this gendered population of fans' considerable economic contribution to the

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game, the skill that is required, the commitment they feel and the joy they find in doing what they love best, despite the warnings and social approbations from family and their community. She uses ethnography to show how gendered identity and femininity are fluid, and in constant tension in the everyday practices of women's soccer. Her *Focus* suggests a challenge to the essentialised racial and gendered construction of Stellenbosch University as the expression of Afrikaner masculinity. Similarly, Engh's creative conceptual juxtaposition of exclusion-inclusion assists us in recuperating the history of women's soccer in South Africa, whilst indicating the tensions surrounding the participation of women across the divides of race and sexual orientation. Her *Briefing* points to the tensions surrounding femininity and sexuality that emanate through

event. They used an exhaustive survey method to surface women's participation as economic agents in the context of Fan Parks. Their findings suggest that women consumers, from South Africa and elsewhere were key economic participants during this sporting event. Given these data, they ask why women's participation in the World Cup remained confined to the sexualised images as desirable objects for the honed masculine participants, whilst their more powerful economic contribution as fans remain invisible. Their research raises the often cited, though misguided image of women solely as sexualised and marginalised spectators of sport. Their *Article* supports the research finding that the 2002 World Cup held in Korea was the most feminised World Cup (Rubin, 2009). While this event apparently had the greatest number of women spectators, Rubin (2009) points out that Korean female fans were presented as finding the World Cup a sexually liberating public event in which they felt free to express their appreciation of the male form.

Their dedication to being fans which took on a highly ritualised and formalised appearance in Korea, was disregarded and their sexual attraction to players was consistently emphasised (Rubin, 2009:270).

It seems that women cannot just be fans - they must be sexualised as objects of desire in their role as soccer fans. Indeed Saeanna Chingamuka's story of her effort to be a fan ('Soccer is a microcosm of our society' Pg 123), suggests that women can only be "fake supporter[s]" in the highly masculinised arena of soccer. The dominant image of women as sexualised passive accoutrements of soccer's main event, the male game, supports the notion that dominant heterosexuality in sport has to be reproduced constantly, as a means to neutralise soccer's and other team sports' homosocial (and possibly homosexual) character. The social reproductive labour that is needed to sustain the

heterosexual character of sport, begs the question about the participation of sexual minorities in sporting events and suggests further grounds for research.

Loots and Witt's *Article* asks how gender is linked to the issue of climate change and FIFA's much trumpeted commitment to environmental sustainability as a key aspect of the Soccer World Cup. They use a holistic ecofeminist approach to interrogate the gendered nature of the climate change debate as exemplified by the green agenda of the World Cup. They examine whether FIFA's and the South African state's claims that the World Cup would facilitate the green agenda has borne fruit for the marginalised communities most affected by climate change and inequality, namely those living in the urban and rural communities. They foreground the Buffelsdraai Landfill Site Community Reforestation Project

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as a case study to examine whether the tree planting project will offset the carbon emissions associated with the sporting event. In addition, they also analyse the structural factors such as climate change that exacerbate rural Maputoland women's resource vulnerability and lock them into poverty. Their *Article* demands a methodological change to our analysis of climate change. They emphasise a systemic analysis of environmental degradation and gendered impoverishment, as a means to surface the links between climate change and gendered inequality. They argue that the corporate friendly approach to climate change adopted by FIFA, and the South African state, displaces responsibility for the management of climate change onto individuals, through projects such as tree planting. This approach renders the

links between gendered inequality and climate change invisible. The very economic system that informs climate change they argue, is left intact, consequently the need to intervene at a systemic level, is unheeded.

Finally, Nora Wintour critically examines the meaning of the FIFA World Cup for informal economy women workers, street vendors. Like Bob and Swart, she critically reflects upon the gendered economic characteristics of this event. Her *Reportback* explicitly asks whether extremely marginalised women street vendors could benefit from the apparent developmental promise of international sports events. Wintour writes of the concerted campaign to assert the rights of street vendors, the majority of whom are women. She shows that in the main, South Africa played by the rules of FIFA and despite some concessions to provide trading sites for vendors displaced by FIFA trading regulations, "many promises of alternate trading sites did not materialise" (pg 110). Clearly soccer, apparently a game played by the poor, is not for the poor as they are the easiest to ignore and victimise, and this is cause for questioning what we gained and what have we lost in the soccer World Cup.

In conclusion, we ask, given the critical reflection on the FIFA World Cup, can we claim that international sporting events yield the development promised? Taken collectively, the authors featured in this edition strongly suggest that the gendered benefits for women during the 2010 World Cup were uneven, if not minimal. They also point to the gendered lessons learned, and the proactive methods that can be implemented across the scholar-activist divide, in order to realise and strengthen the benefits of women's participation in sport for a gender-equal world.

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VENITHA PILLAY is an Associate Professor in the faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. Her research is on women and higher education and on feminist research methodologies. She has two daughters, Kiara and Tahlia.



ELAINE SALO is director of the Institute for Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Pretoria. Her research interests include gender and sexuality issues amongst youth in post-apartheid South Africa, and gender, race and transformation in higher education. She has published widely in these areas.

