

**Empowering Women and Girls through  
Sports: An Evaluation of a U.S. Department  
of State Sports Diplomacy Initiative**

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## **Introduction**

On June 21, 2012 at the U.S. Department of State, one could have heard a set of remarks on a topic that is seldom at the forefront of the workings of the State Department: “International Efforts to Empower Women and Girls through Sports” (“Clinton, ESPN President on Empowering Women Through Sports”). The remarks came in conjunction with an announcement about the Global Sports Mentoring Program, a program housed within the State Department’s Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative. Secretary Clinton and ESPN President John Skipper sought to provide perspective on the program, the Initiative, and ultimately the potential that sports have as a tool to empower women and girls both domestically and abroad. Secretary Clinton spoke to her own experiences, noting that “Sports can make you stronger, tougher, more confident, more resilient, and those qualities stay with you long after you finish the race or the final buzzer sounds” (“Clinton, ESPN President on Empowering Women Through Sports”).

In the nearly three years since this announcement, the Initiative has seen three rounds of the Global Sports Mentoring Program as well as a myriad of programs in the Initiative’s other two branches, Sports Visitors and Sports Envoys. Given the uniqueness of the Initiative and its ability to speak to the success of such programs, it is an interesting case study in the world of sports diplomacy. Though there have been many programs worldwide that ultimately used sports as a tool to cross barriers, promote engagement, encourage empowerment, or a similar goal, few of them have used a top-down approach from a federal-level department such as the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative. While the State Department has given the primary role of implementation to their partners at the University of Tennessee’s Center for Sport, Peace, and Society, they have provided funding and support through various means. By connecting

women abroad to women in the United States through the various branches of the Initiative, the State Department hopes to, as Secretary Hillary Clinton noted, harness “the power of sports to bring people together across barriers of all kinds – national barriers, language, cultural, racial barriers, and increasingly across the divide of gender” (“Clinton, ESPN President on Empowering Women through Sports”).

As such, this paper seeks to evaluate the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative by posing the question: Is the Initiative effective? To accomplish this, the paper will first provide extensive background. By understanding the ins and outs of the Initiative including its goals and the way these are realized, effectiveness may be better understood as well. Beyond this, the paper will discuss the available data and the methods used to reach conclusion on effectiveness. Using the available data and accompanying literature, the paper will analyze the various programs that have been incorporated through the Initiative. From this analysis, conclusions will be drawn that will speak to broader implications and the Initiative’s potential for continued success as well as answer the question: Is the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative effective in achieving its goals?

### **Background**

In an ever-changing world of diplomacy, there are a variety of initiatives that seek to promote people-to-people diplomacy and forge connections across cultural barriers. Moreover, various initiatives seek to provide opportunities for minorities and other oppressed groups by promoting equality and empowerment. With these goals in mind, the U.S. Department of State established the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative. The initiative is housed under the U.S. Department of State’s SportsUnited sports diplomacy division and involves various programs to promote the goal of “empowering women and girls through sports” such as

the Sports Visitors Program, the Sports Envoys Program, and the Global Sports Mentoring Program. The scope and goals of each of these programs is unique and specific, with each of them contributing to the ultimate goal of empowerment and social change using sports as a means to that end.

### **Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative**

#### **History of sports diplomacy and the U.S. Department of State's involvement.**

Though sports diplomacy could realistically be traced back to the ancient Olympics, its value and the extent of its possibilities are only recently being realized. Conceptually, sports diplomacy is a rather new frontier and one that houses much potential. Beginning with “ping pong diplomacy” involving U.S. and Chinese players in the 1970s, it has seen a tremendous amount of growth in the past few decades (Murgai 1). According to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, sports diplomacy essentially seeks to “[use] the universal passion for sports as a way to transcend linguistic and sociocultural differences and bring people together” (“Sports Diplomacy”).

Additionally, ECA notes that “Participation in sports teaches leadership, teamwork, and communication skills that help young people succeed in all areas of their lives” (“Sports Diplomacy”). As a result of this perspective, the ECA established the SportsUnited division, which is dedicated to the use of sports diplomacy as expressed through various initiatives and programs.

Under the umbrella of the SportsUnited division of the State Department, one can find the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative. The initiative essentially began in 2012 as it coincided with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Title IX when Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and ESPN President John Skipper established the Global Sports Mentoring Program as the keystone of the Initiative (“The Story Behind the Program”). The Initiative was

founded in Secretary Clinton's desire to use smart power and the entire scope of diplomatic tools, including that of sports, in an effort to empower women and girls globally ("The Program"). It is based largely upon the concepts developed by a United Nations report titled, "Women 2000—Women, Gender Equality, and Sports" which empirically promoted the value of empowering women and girls through sports ("The Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative-Media Note"). The report laid out the potential that such a tool would have and the State Department specifically focused on:

- Women and girls acquire new professional networks, develop a sense of identity and access new opportunities to become more engaged in school and community life;
- Sports serve as a vehicle to improve women's and girls' leadership roles and participation in decision-making;
- Sports convene people across borders, cultures and belief systems, and can promote greater tolerance and understanding among individuals and communities;
- Girls' participation in sports can challenge gender stereotypes and break down discriminatory attitudes;
- Sports teams and organizations provide an excellent opportunity to provide information and promote dialogue on the importance of girls' education; and
- Studies show a direct correlation between girls' participation in sports and higher education and employment; and that a single year of primary education correlates with a 10 – 20 percent increase in women's wages later in life; a single year of secondary education results in a 15 – 25 percent increase. ("The Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative-Media Note")

**Who is involved.** One of the most interesting facets of the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative is how it is realized. The primary collaborator is the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The ECA is primarily concerned with “[promoting] mutual understanding between Americans and people from around the world through a wide range of academic, cultural, private sector, professional and sports exchange programs” (“The Team”). In addition to the State Department, the Initiative has been developed with support from espnW, ESPN’s outlet for all things women in sports. EspnW seeks to “serve women as fans and athletes” while “[providing] an engaging environment that offers total access to female athletes and the sports they play, takes fans inside the biggest events, and shares a unique point of view on the sports stories that matter most to women” (“The Team”). With these partners established at the forefront of the Initiative, they sought after a third partner through whom the programs could actually be completed and carried out. Through this desire, they chose the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society at the University of Tennessee to be the foremost implementer of the programs. Housed in the College of Education, Health, and Human Service, the Center consists of full-time staff that is supported by student efforts. The ultimate mission of the Center is “[to use] sport, physical activity, and recreation to promote cultural understanding, to enhance student learning, to improve community welfare, and to foster social change” (“Who We Are-Vision + Mission”).

In addition to the three major collaborators in the Initiative, the U.S. Department of State maintains the Council to Empower Women and Girls through Sports to support the goals of the Initiative and provide valuable perspective on the lives of women in sports (“The Council”). The Council includes women who are current and retired athletes, corporate executives, journalists, coaches, and generally involved in women’s sports in some capacity (“The Council”). The

Council includes Tamika Catchings, Donna Devarona, Julie Foudy, Mia Hamm, April Heinrichs, Sally Jenkins, Michelle Kwan, Jessica Mendoza, Ibtihaj Muhammad, Aimee Mullins, Angela Ruggiero, Annika Sorenstam, Sage Steele, and C. Vivian Stringer (“The Council”). Many of these women have played major roles in different programs housed under the Initiative and they all seek to “[engage] audiences in the United States and overseas to elevate the global conversation on sports as a means of empowerment” (“The Council”).

Clearly, an Initiative of such a broad scope necessitates many actors to see it come to fruition. In having three unique partners that each bring something different to the table, the Initiative is able to promote real, effective, people-to-people diplomacy using an especially valuable diplomatic tool. Additionally, its different components can be fulfilled using the means of each partner and the tools that they each maintain. Beyond just these partners, having a Council with women who have each played a major role in the lives of women in sports allows the Initiative to stay grounded in solid perspective and continue to promote engagement through women with potential to continue to blaze trails.

**What the initiative is.** In essence, the Initiative is realized through three major components that take the form of Sports Visitors, Sports Envoys, and the Global Sports Mentoring Program. Each of these programs has its own unique goals while still promoting the broader goals of the Initiative as a whole. The Visitors program brings women and girls from abroad to the U.S., the Envoys program sends women from the U.S. to work with women and girls abroad, and the Mentor program creates mentorship relationships with women who come from abroad to work with American sports professionals.

Sports Visitors involves a two-week exchange program in which athletes and coaches come to the United States for a series of programs focused on empowerment (“About Sports

Visitors”). Beyond just the focus on empowerment, visitors programs often deal with team building, learning about diversity in sport, and the value of cross-cultural understanding (“About Sports Visitors”). Often, these programs bring together small groups from different countries to the same place in the U.S. to go through the program as a larger group. In doing so, cross-cultural understanding and realizing the importance of diversity may be communicated even among the groups from each country.

Though a less prominent component than either the Sports Visitors or the Global Sports Mentoring Program, Sports Envoys allows that women who have been professional athletes, coaches, or administrators travel to other countries to connect them with the idea of the potential for empowerment for women and girls through sports (“Envoy Program”). With the support of each country’s U.S. Embassy, the envoys are able to be a part of different programs that help the community to understand the value of such empowerment using sport (“Envoy Program”). For example, in the first year of the Initiative, twelve envoys were sent around the world to be a part of clinics and team-building programs abroad (“Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative-Media Note”). This type of program has seen success with various professional athletes under the SportsUnited division and the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative aims to continue with similar results.

The so-called “flagship program” of the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative is the Global Sports Mentoring Program (“The Story Behind the Program”). The Global Sports Mentoring Program seeks to connect “emerging female leaders from around the globe with female senior executives at leading U.S. organizations in the sports sector” (“The Story Behind the Program”). With this connection, a mentorship program takes place for a month in the United States after the emerging leaders are chosen by their country’s respective U.S.

Embassy (“The Story Behind the Program”). Participants are chosen based both on their potential and their past accomplishments including their prior involvement in the sports sector and their ability to reach people in their home country using sports (“The Story Behind the Program”). While in the United States, the mentorship allows for personal growth and progress as well as the development of a plan for how to impact their home community using sports to empower women and girls especially (“The Story Behind the Program”).

Through this experience, participants are exposed to women in similar positions from around the world and women in the U.S. who have seen sports work as a tool for empowerment, understanding, and social change. Consequently, the program generates a “global network of women and girls who strive to create positive change in their home communities through sports” and the potential for the sharing of resources, ideas, perspectives, and goals (“The Story Behind the Program”). As Secretary Clinton noted, the hope of the Global Sports Mentoring Program is that “Through mentoring and networking we want to support the rise of women sports leaders abroad, who, in turn, can help nurture the next generation of girl and women athletes” (“Clinton, ESPN President on Empowering Women through Sports”).

**Where the initiative is active.** The SportsUnited division has seen many programs and initiatives come to fruition in the lives of thousands of people in well over a hundred countries. In the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative, these countries have been different depending on the program. The following were found on the Initiative’s website under the category of “Program Countries”:

Visitor Program Countries:

|           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| Argentina | Oman     |
| Bahamas   | Pakistan |

|            |                                |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| Bahrain    | Philippines                    |
| Brazil     | Qatar                          |
| Colombia   | Saudi Arabia                   |
| Iran       | Senegal                        |
| Iraq       | South Korea                    |
| Kyrgyzstan | St. Vincent and the Grenadines |
| Lebanon    | Suriname                       |
| Liberia    | Trinidad and Tobago            |
| Lithuania  | Turkey                         |
| Mongolia   | Venezuela                      |
| Nigeria    | Yemen                          |

Envoy Countries:

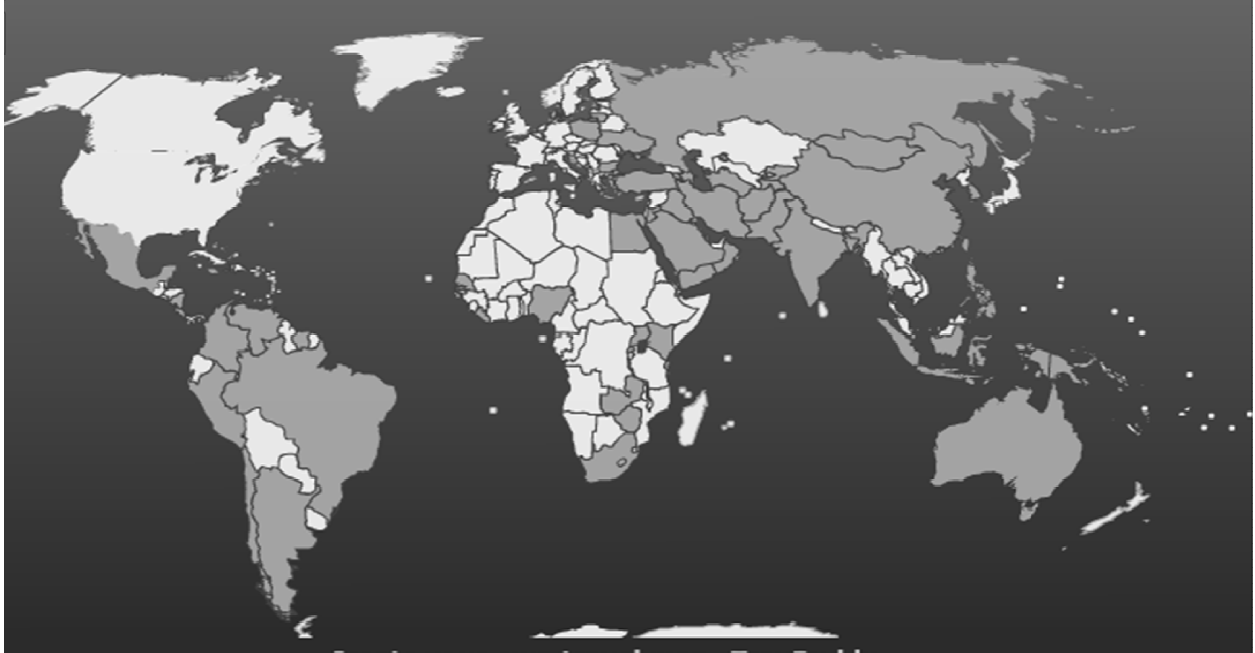
|             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| Afghanistan | Nicaragua |
| Chile       | Peru      |
| Costa Rica  | Ukraine   |

Mentor Countries:

|            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| Argentina  | Mexico           |
| Armenia    | Nigeria          |
| Australia  | Pakistan         |
| Azerbaijan | Papua New Guinea |
| Bangladesh | Peru             |

|           |              |
|-----------|--------------|
| Brazil    | Philippines  |
| Bulgaria  | Poland       |
| China     | Russia       |
| Colombia  | Rwanda       |
| Denmark   | Singapore    |
| Egypt     | South Africa |
| Haiti     | Taiwan       |
| India     | Tajikistan   |
| Indonesia | Turkey       |
| Jamaica   | Turkmenistan |
| Jordan    | Uganda       |
| Kenya     | Ukraine      |
| Lebanon   | Zambia       |
| Macedonia | Zimbabwe     |

Overall, many different countries have been included in the programs. It seeks to cover the many various regions that would benefit from these types of programs. In doing so, the initiative has been worldwide in its scope and seen prevalence in six continents. Though some countries have been involved in more than one program or the same program multiple times, the Initiative is always looking to broaden how much of the world it encompasses and the number of countries it is able to reach through these efforts. This map highlights the many countries that the Initiative has reached and demonstrates the fairly global scope of this particular diplomacy effort:



**Why the initiative exists.** Through each of these programs and their varying scopes, a number of goals are achieved and met. First and foremost, the Initiative stems from Secretary Clinton's desire to employ a full scope of diplomatic tools. This goal is certainly realized through the use of an unlikely tool in the form of sports. Additionally, the Initiative hopes to see an increase in sports participation for women and girls worldwide ("The Initiative"). The five general goals of the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative include:

1. To use sports exchange programmes to increase female access and opportunities to sport worldwide;
2. To enhance cross-cultural understanding;
3. To use life skills training to promote personal and professional development of women;
4. To encourage critical thinking about gender equality, inclusion and human rights and
5. To assist females in becoming active agents of positive change. (Samie et. al 2)

Though specific goals for the Global Sports Mentoring Program, these goals laid out by the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society are important as they speak to and are certainly related to the overarching goals for the Initiative as a whole:

1. To introduce foreign participants to the United States through sports
2. To increase the capacity of girls and women's sports programs internationally
3. To encourage professional mentoring relationships and networks
4. To promote the use of sports to enhance cross-cultural understanding ("Program Goals")

In seeing these goals come to fruition, the Center employs the "Four E's Model of Engagement":

1. To expose participants to the cultural, social, civic, and community life in America, specifically emphasizing diversity, cross-cultural understanding, and the role of sports in the United States.
2. To equip participants with the skills, resources, and networks necessary to convert new knowledge into flexible and sustainable Action Plans.
3. To empower participants by providing a safe and structured space to begin the transition from "theory to practice."
4. To entrust participants to implement a sports-based Action Plan project in coordination with local partners that positively impacts girls and women in their local communities. ("Program Goals")

The various goals and methods of this program directly impact the extent to which it is effective. In laying out goals that are specific enough to provide direction but ambiguous enough to allow for flexibility, the Initiative can be realized through different programs that relate to the particular women that are participating.

To answer the question, “Is the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative effective?” it is valuable to consider the history of the State Department’s involvement in sports diplomacy, who is involved in the Initiative, what the Initiative is, where the Initiative is active, and ultimately why the Initiative exists. Each facet of this background lends itself to the answering of the question and whether or not the level of effectiveness could have broader implications outside of this specific initiative. If, in fact, it is effective, it could be beneficial in seeing similar programs realized.

### **Data and Methods**

Measuring the effectiveness of a policy is difficult, but has the potential to speak to the implications of the policy and whether or not similar measures could be taken in the future. To answer the question of whether or not the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative has been effective, this paper looks at interviews as well as personal narratives from women involved in different programs and supporting literature.

### **Key Concepts**

In measuring effectiveness, what effectiveness is and how it is measured must be defined first and foremost. Effectiveness, in layman’s terms, may be defined as “the degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result” (*Oxford Dictionaries*). In essence, this paper seeks to ask the questions: Does this program work? Is it successful? Does it accomplish its goals? By examining each of the following goals using the data and literature associated with the Initiative, this paper seeks to answer those questions:

1. To use sports exchange programmes to increase female access and opportunities to sport worldwide;
2. To enhance cross-cultural understanding;

3. To use life skills training to promote personal and professional development of women;
4. To encourage critical thinking about gender equality, inclusion and human rights and
5. To assist females in becoming active agents of positive change. (Samie et. al 2)

Each of these goals will be evaluated with the information on programs that have taken part to date as a part of the Initiative. This includes a scope of interview data from the Global Sports Mentoring Program, specific program information from Sports Visitors and Sports Envoys programs, and outside literature with similar goals to this paper.

### **Interviews and Accompanying Literature from Center for Sport, Peace, and Society**

Given their status as the implementing partner of the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative, the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society also maintained the responsibility of evaluating and understanding participants in the program, especially the Global Sports Mentoring Program. In large part, this evaluation took the form of pre-program interviews and interviews that took place part-way through the participants' experience in America. The interviews were structured but allowed for some flexibility to follow up on certain comments or perspectives that were provided. As such, the interviews allowed for comparison across participants as well a means by which the program might be evaluated for success and, more specifically, effectiveness. These interviews were reviewed by the CSPS for commonalities and were incorporated into a paper published in "Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics." The paper, entitled, "Voices of empowerment: women from the Global South re/negotiating empowerment and the global sports mentoring programme," plays a major role in this paper and its evaluation of effectiveness for the Initiative. However, given its potential for bias, it is not without its shortcomings in measuring this. Nevertheless, given that the authors

were largely staff from the CSPA as well as the conductors of the interview, they sought to be critical and eliminate or avoid as much bias as possible. In fact, in such a paper as this, the authors noted:

Focusing on participant's stories of empowerment is not an attempt to 'hijack' their accomplishments to bolster the success of an initiative in which we played a pivotal role as educators and facilitators. Rather, it is a critical attempt for us, as western-based critical educators to listen to and learn from those women whom the wider EWGTS initiative seeks to help, and from those women who are frequently pathologized as victims in need of rescuing. (Samie et. al 3, 4)

This acknowledgement allows that the paper may be used for effectiveness but not without some reservation. Regardless, there is no perfect way to use interview data or qualitative data in general. With this in mind, this paper seeks to use the findings of the CSPA to speak to themes of effectiveness in a unique Initiative.

### **State Department Memos and Publications**

As a result of the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative being a largely State Department-based initiative, there have been a significant number of memos delivered as a result. While these memos largely provided valuable and important background information, the State Department has also overseen the provision of information to accompany each of the programs that are part of the Initiative. Furthermore, the Department maintains a series of writings in conjunction with staff from the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society as well as espnW to look at implementation of Action Plans when women return to their home communities. These writings in particular will contribute in a significant way to how I evaluate the Initiative for effectiveness.

As a result, the findings of this paper may be biased to the effect of affirming effectiveness where it may only be prevalent in some situations. Realistically, the State Department would not highlight women or programs that have not yielded positive results. Rather, they would seek to earn support for the Initiative by promoting its successes rather than acknowledging its shortcomings. Consequently, I will not be able to cover the fullness of each program, but rather will highlight similarly those that the State Department and its partners have chosen to highlight for itself. This lends itself to incomplete coverage, but it is simply the information that is available. Despite this incomplete coverage, I will be able to discuss each aspect of the Initiative as they have provided examples within Sports Envoys, Sports Visitors, and the Global Sports Mentoring Program.

### **Additional Literature**

In addition to the literature found from the partners that conduct the Initiative, there is a multitude of literature on the concept of sports diplomacy and sport as a tool for development and peace. However, since the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative is a new Initiative, only realized since 2012, there is very little literature written specifically about the Initiative. This makes it difficult to examine as a program as there are so few programs like it in the United States or even globally. Nevertheless, one particular paper was written that looks at the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative using a neoliberal feminist perspective. The paper, entitled “Imagining neoliberal feminisms? Thinking critically about the US diplomacy campaign, ‘Empowering Women and Girls Through Sports,’” provided valuable perspective from a source outside of the partners of the Initiative and served as a critical resource for the evaluation of the program’s effectiveness. While other writings provided perspective on sports diplomacy as it relates to women overall, this writing shed the most light on the Initiative

and was used prominently as a result. The majority of other writings were used to develop and understand the background, but this particular writing provided real critique and analysis of the Initiative that this paper seeks to explore.

## **Analysis**

### **Interviews and Accompanying Literature**

As outlined in the Data and Methods section, women who participated in the Global Sports Mentoring Program took part in interview sessions with faculty from the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society to discuss the impact of the program on their personal empowerment as well as its potential impact on their home communities. Much of this interview data was evaluated in a paper written by these faculty members and published in “Sport and Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, and Politics.” Useful in determining how effective the program, these interviews and the accompanying literature which seeks to analyze them speak to many of the successes and potential of these types of mentorship sports diplomacy efforts.

The paper evaluates interviews from 27 women from 22 different countries in Africa, Central and Latin America, East Asia and the Pacific, and South and Central Asia who participated in the Global Sports Mentoring Program in either 2012 or 2013 (Samie et. al 4). Data was accumulated both before the women’s participation in the Global Sports Mentoring Program and during a midpoint in the program so as to develop perspective at both stages (Samie et. al 5). To describe the data and allow it to speak, the faculty of the CSPA “analysed segments of interviews to observe patterns, discover relationships, commonalities and differences across stories, while simultaneously absorbing the contexts and recognizing the emotions imbued in participants’ perceptions, testimonies, experiences and histories” (Samie et. al 6). In doing so,

they noted impressions of empowerment pre- and post-participation in the program as well as the reasons behind such sentiments.

According to the data, each of the women interviewed felt a sense of empowerment due to the position they were in, education they had been able to attain, or a similar feeling of accomplishment (Samie et. al 6). Furthermore, a participant noted that “the self-worth females gleaned from feeling empowered was conducive to fostering an undeterred attitude to want to ‘fight against’ complex forms of inequality and injustice, ‘fight for’ control over their lives and ‘fight to have’ their voices heard” (Samie et. al 6). Based on their original thoughts about empowerment, the mid-program interviews aim to see what effect, if any, participation in the program and its associated endeavors had on participants.

During their participation in the program, the women are exposed to education and involved in discussion with the staff of the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society in an attempt to encourage participants to “think about three dimensions of power: (1) oppressive power of existing gender relations; (2) power to critically challenge; and (3) participatory power to shape different social relations” (Samie et. al 9). From this, they may develop a greater understanding of their own potential while also hearing from other women who will become a part of the network that the program naturally forms. Additionally, the programs hopes to broaden horizons in many ways, but especially in terms of empowerment and potential.

Throughout involvement in the Global Sports Mentoring Program, “CSPS educators [help participants] think about axes of oppression that limit women’s social, educational, political and legal opportunities for progress, and collude and intersect to re/produce structural inequalities and hierarchical gendered relations” (Samie et. al 9). Based on the data from the interviews, the authors gathered that participants “developed a more lucid and intricate

understanding of the dynamics of empowerment, oppression and inequality as it related to people, communities, societies and structure and agency” as they were involved in and exposed to the various facets of the program (Samie et. al 9, 10).

Overall, though the interview data was somewhat limited as it only had some participants from the first two cycles of the Global Sports Mentoring Program, it is evident that the program expanded women’s perceptions of empowerment. With the discussion between participants and Center for Sport, Peace, and Society staff, both parties had the opportunity to gain valuable perspective that could impact their own lives.

### **espnW and U.S. Department of State Global Sports Mentoring Program Series**

In an attempt to gain awareness and increase knowledge about the success of the Global Sports Mentoring Program, espnW and the U.S. Department of State released a series of writings on some of the past members of the program. Though fairly limited in the scope and number of writings, each of the stories and discussions has the potential to speak to the effectiveness of the Global Sports Mentoring Program. As such, this section seeks to examine the writing series to display the impact that the program has had in the lives of its participants and the way they have translated this impact into taking action in their home communities to see other women and girls have their lives changed using sports as a tool.

**Yasmin Helal.** One of the participants that the Initiative partners chose to highlight is a women from Egypt named Yasmin Helal. Helal, a female basketball player who spent time on the Egyptian National team, developed her passion and conviction to inspire change after being approached by a man who requested around \$20 to help him send his three daughters to school (Tomlinson). After leaving a job at a telecommunications firm, Helal started a non-profit organization called Educate-Me that seeks to provide unique educational opportunities for

children in areas where there are few of such opportunities (Tomlinson). Based on the success of the non-profit in providing such services to 200 students annually, Helal was recognized as someone with the potential to see sports realized a useful tool for the community and was accepted into the Global Sports Mentoring Program for the 2014 cycle (Tomlinson).

Helal's non-profit, Educate-Me, is unique in the scope of programs that it covers based on her intention of "challenging the rigidity of the public school system by cultivating her students' creativity" (Tomlinson). As such, the program teaches classes like language instruction, fashion, and basketball (Tomlinson). In fact, after being exposed to the Global Sports Mentoring Program and the network that it creates, Helal and Educate-Me connected to another participant, Hayam Essam, and her non-profit called Girl Power Egypt, which uses basketball to achieve similar goals (Tomlinson). Both programs hope to promote education and life skills using sports and other creative means as tools.

With the help of her mentor at Playworks, Tonya Antonucci, Helal was able to scale up the sports component of Educate-Me as well as develop skills and gather information on how best to market the program in communities that are riddled with skepticism (Meet the Match: Yasmin Helal & Tonya Antonucci). With her desire to see the program grow and continue, and with Antonucci's position as Chief Marketing Officer, Helal has seen this realized and now faces a waiting list for Educate-Me that often exceeds 450 students (Tomlinson; Meet the Match: Yasmin Helal & Tonya Antonucci).

**Yu-Tsien Tseng.** Another participant of the Global Sports Mentoring Program that the Initiative partners chose to highlight is a woman from Taiwan name Yu-Tsien Tseng, more fondly known as "Blue" (Angel). Blue is an associate professor at the National University in Taipei whose research includes topics like gender and sports, and more recently the inclusion of

LGBT people in sports (Angel). Before being accepted into the Global Sports Mentoring Program, Blue began researching Title IX legislation in the U.S. and its position on equality for men's and women's sports (Angel). From this, she began to search for similar legislation in Taiwan and found an act that ensured equal academic supports for males and females (Angel). With this momentum, she hoped to eventually see legislation in Taiwan that was similar to Title IX and allowed for greater participation in sports for women and girls in her home country (Angel).

Given her goals of seeing changes in sports governance as well as seeing greater opportunities for women, girls, and the LGBT population, she was paired with Delise O'Meally and Karen Morrison, women who served as Director of Governance and International Affairs and Director of Inclusion, respectively (Angel; Meet the Match: Yu-Hsien "Blue" Tseng & Delise O'Meally/Karen Morrison). During her time in the U.S. and with the NCAA, Blue was able to learn from and develop valuable experience with the Alliance of Women Coaches and the NCAA's Committee on Women's Athletics as well as colleges that have strong women's athletics programs as a result of Title IX (Angel). Though her ultimate goal is a similar piece of legislation in Taiwan, her mentors throughout the program assisted her in developing an action plan that would use increased physical education in schools for girls to develop a love of sports that "could grow organically into youth leagues, clubs and eventually professional teams like the ones in the U.S" (Angel).

Upon returning to Taiwan after the Global Sports Mentoring Program, Blue started a workshop that helped to teach physical education teachers how to encourage greater sports participation for girls in their schools (Angel). In addition to these workshops, Blue organized a panel on gender equity and sports with the help of one of her mentors from the NCAA (Angel).

She hopes to continue to use these workshops to see an increase in female sports participation with the ultimate goal of seeing this lead to Title IX inspired legislation and greater equity in Taiwan.

**Maqulate Onyango.** A member of the Global Sports Mentoring Program’s 2014 cycle, Maqulate Onyango grew up in a slum of Nairobi, Kenya where she first played soccer (Brady). While her brothers went to school from a relatively early age, she did not start attending school until she was thirteen years old (Meet the Match: Maqulate Onyango & Gwen Conley). At that time, Onyango was contacted by the Mathare Youth Sports Association which offered her “an opportunity to play in their local soccer league and to participate in community clean-up projects” in exchange for the Association paying for her to attend school (Meet the Match: Maqulate Onyango & Gwen Conley). After them helping her to gain an education to the point that she was able to graduate from high school, she decided to volunteer with the Association as a coach for a league of young girls (Meet the Match: Maqulate Onyango & Gwen Conley). From this, Onyango realized the lack of female referees and became one of few in the whole country of Kenya even as a teenager (Brady; Meet the Match: Maqulate Onyango & Gwen Conley). Given her success, she eventually became the “first Kenyan woman to be selected as a Match Commissioner by the African Football Confederation, one of the highest honors and responsibilities performed by a football official” (Meet the Match: Maqulate Onyango & Gwen Conley).

Now, Onyango works as the Director of the Sports and Environment Program at the Mathare Youth Sports Association (Meet the Match: Maqulate Onyango & Gwen Conley). With what she learned from her time in the Global Sports Mentoring Program, she hopes to see an increase in women’s participation in sports in Kenya as well as more structured possibilities past

the youth level (Brady). As of now, the national team has dealt with corruption and scandal that has made it difficult for talented girls to move past the primary level (Brady). Currently, Onyango works with more than 500 women and children while using sports to conduct “workshops on HIV/AIDS awareness, gender-based violence prevention, child protection, and teenage pregnancy aversion” (Meet the Match: Maqulate Onyango & Gwen Conley).

When asked about why she was participating in the Global Sports Mentoring Program and why sports are important to her, Onyango responded:

Sports, it's my life... Without sports I could not have gone to school. Without sports I would not be in a position to encourage girls to stand up for their own dreams and rights. I want to continue mobilizing as many women as possible, because if you're alone, you cannot make it, but if we are so many, then people can hear you... If women cannot speak for other women, who will? (Brady)

Along with her mentor, Gwen Conley who serves as the Senior Director of Media for communication and advertising giant Saatchi and Saatchi, Onyango developed an action plan that hopes to see sports in Kenya continue to be used in the same way they were used in her own life (Brady; Meet the Match: Maqulate Onyango & Gwen Conley). She would love to be a part of the establishment of women's professional leagues as well as a stronger presence for the Kenyan national team in the future.

**Geraldine Bernardo.** As a woman at the age of 37 living in the Philippines, Geraldine Bernardo looked to dragon boat racing as “something to keep her spirits afloat” (Blades, “Geraldine Bernardo”). Eventually, she went on to join the national team despite being ten years past the age criteria (Blades, “Geraldine Bernardo”). A few years later, Bernardo became the captain of Philippine National Dragon Boat Women's Team and won a gold medal at the

Southeast Asian Games at the age of 39 (Blades, “Geraldine Bernardo”). As a result of her time with the national team and with dragon boat racing in general, she became interested in sports as a tool to unify and empower and started volunteering with the Olympic Committee (Blades, “Geraldine Bernardo”). Based upon this work as well as her time with the Athlete Welfare and Advocacy Committee, she joined the 2012 cycle of the Global Sports Mentoring Program (Blades, “Geraldine Bernardo”). Her action plan resulted in workshops for physical education teachers in a Muslim girls’ school and included other plans before Super Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in November 2013 (Blades, “Geraldine Bernardo”).

After the devastation of the typhoon, Bernardo worked with people and schools in the Philippines, as well as with her mentors from the Global Sports Mentoring Program and the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society, to develop RePLAY, ReLIVE, ReNEW, otherwise known as R3 (Blades, “Geraldine Bernardo”). R3 is, essentially, “a seminar workshop and organized sports activities group to help heal communities shattered by disaster using sports intervention” (Blades, “Geraldine Bernardo”). Bernardo has both trained people to better serve their communities using sports as well as worked directly with children and their families to help them deal with the wake of the typhoon (Blades, “Geraldine Bernardo”). In addition to R3, Bernardo is starting a new project this year called 118 Courts which hopes to restore basketball courts around the country to make them multi-purpose for other activities like volleyball or community events (Blades, “Geraldine Bernardo”). Bernardo’s support from the network she established with the Global Sports Mentoring Program as well as her personal calling to see sports used a tool to overcome tragedy has allowed her to have a substantial impact in the Philippines that will surely continue through the coming years.

**Luz Amuchastegui.** In the 2013 cycle of the Global Sports Mentoring Program, one could find Argentinian Luz Amuchastegui. After playing as a field hockey goalie for most of her life, Amuchastegui started working for El Desafío Foundation, a non-profit in her hometown, while also starting two companies called Evolution Factory and Keep Going Hockey (Mackenzie; Meet the Match: Luz Amuchastegui & Joan Coraggio, Gwen Conley). As the Programs Director for the non-profit, Amuchastegui and El Desafío use “social programs in art, dance, professional skills and, yes, sports, to teach [children] life skills and help to break the cycle” of poverty that plagues Argentina (Mackenzie). After starting from the ground up with her previous coach, Amuchastegui and El Desafío now work with over 130 kids and 17 different programs (Mackenzie). When posed the question, “...how do sports work into your dream of ending poverty?” Amuchastegui responded:

Sports gives you a vision, I think. Sports allows you to understand that if you work hard enough you will see the results. Once you understand that through sports you can accomplish things on an individual basis, the person can make plans for his or her life, defining who they want to be in life. It's not just things like going to university, but even making choices for themselves and knowing how to accomplish them. (Mackenzie)

With this sentiment in mind, Amuchastegui hopes to continue to harness the power of sports to inspire change in her community (Mackenzie). Since her time in the Global Sports Mentoring Program, Amuchastegui has “developed a mentorship program for at-risk youth participating in after-school field hockey classes at El Desafío Foundation” (GSMP Honors 5 Alumnae). After being paired with Joan Coraggio and Gwen Conley of Saatchi and Saatchi, Amuchastegui was able to learn from their methods of creativity and promote a successful program (Meet the Match: Luz Amuchastegui & Joan Coraggio, Gwen Conley).

**Fatima Saleem.** 29-year-old Pakistani TV reporter Fatima Saleem “came to the U.S. seeking advice on how to set up a mentorship program for other Pakistani women who want to become sports journalists but are afraid to enter a field where few women go” (Saleem). However, after her time in the Global Sports Mentoring Program, Saleem realized that not enough women appreciate and enjoy sports, noting that, “Women need to fall in love with sports in order to cover them” (Saleem). With that in mind, Saleem hoped to start volleyball programs for girls in area schools to inspire a new generation of women and girls who have fallen in love with sports (Saleem). Since her time in the program and in returning to Pakistan, Saleem has started Go Girl Pakistan, which has established “a safe place to play soccer and other sports via no-cost clinics run by professional, women coaches” for girls aged 5 to 12 (Blades, “Fatima Saleem”). Despite the program’s initial success and Saleem’s achievement in receiving grants and donations, the programs had to take a hiatus due to the violence that has plagued Pakistan (Blades, “Fatima Saleem”). Though the government has suspended after-school activities like the clinics Saleem had established, once activities are resumed Go Girl Pakistan will be reaching 20 schools and hundreds of young girls (Blades, “Fatima Saleem”). Even with such unfortunate circumstances in the region, Saleem still remains hopeful, due in part to what she calls “the Malala effect” (Blades, “Fatima Saleem”). Referring to the young victim who eventually won the Nobel Peace Prize, Saleem notes that she sees that “We have thousands of Malalas now” and that children are inspired by her story and hope to make progress on their own stories (Blades, “Fatima Saleem”).

### **Critical Analysis from Outside Perspective**

While perspective from outside sources can be both useful and valuable in understanding effectiveness, few of such sources are available for such a new program. However, “Imagining

neoliberal feminisms? Thinking critically about the US diplomacy campaign, ‘Empowering Women and Girls Through Sports’” by Mary McDonald is the primary example of this necessary source. As such, this section seeks to evaluate her paper and provide a different take from someone who is personally removed from the inner workings of the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative.

Throughout the paper, McDonald provides critique on the Initiative and its programs from a neoliberal feminist perspective. She argues that some feminist analyses see issues with such programs that aim to empower women as they promote “the simplistic belief that with the right guidance and opportunity, women and girls in targeted areas around the globe will develop the necessary economic skills and cultural competencies to overcome poverty, gender stereotypes, and adverse health conditions” (McDonald 3). In essence, this type of program and its supporters at the State Department, the University of Tennessee, and similar groups may think of “girls and women of the global South as ‘entrepreneurial subjects’ who have the ability to ‘empower’ and help themselves as well as their families and communities to achieve greater social and economic security” (McDonald 3). The Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative ultimately promotes a softer image of diplomacy than is traditionally seen in foreign affairs (McDonald 5). Additionally, it employs the “full range of diplomatic tools” while using public-private partnerships to see its goals realized (McDonald 5, 6).

Nevertheless, McDonald argues that the program and related sports diplomacy texts “suggest that issues of low self-esteem and health reside in women and that being granted the right and choice to participate in sport will overcome these personal troubles for the good of the community” which could ultimately create an issue if such an Initiative reveals insurmountable issues in some countries. Essentially, McDonald raises a point of contention in the case that “the

construction of global gender equality initiatives as national security issues additionally creates a scenario whereby future US military action could be ideologically justified by US politicians' assessment of whether appropriate rights have been afforded to women and girls by a particular nation state" (McDonald 8).

Overall, the paper positions itself as one that asks difficult and important questions about the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative and similar programs. Though it makes no claims about the effectiveness of the program, it speaks to the importance of maintaining a critical lens through which to view a relatively unique Initiative and the slippery slope that can come from using distinctive diplomacy tools rather than traditional ones.

### **Conclusion**

As Secretary of State John Kerry noted in an op-ed for International Women's Day, "No country can get ahead if it leaves half of its people behind. This is why the United States believes gender equality is critical to our shared goals of prosperity, stability, and peace, and why investing in women and girls worldwide is critical to advancing U.S. foreign policy" (Kerry). With this sentiment in mind, programs like the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative seek to use the full range of diplomatic tools to enable greater participation in sports, and ultimately in their communities, for women and girls around the globe. By evaluating the analysis from the previous section, this section hopes to draw conclusions about the Initiative and ultimately answer the question of whether or not it is effective.

### **Goals of the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative**

As the goals of the Initiative were discussed by the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society in its writing on the Global Sports Mentoring Program, it is useful to evaluate the effectiveness of the Initiative with these goals in mind. With the interview data, stories of particular

participants and programs, and critical analysis in mind, this section seeks to draw conclusions about each of the goals that have been previously laid out.

**To use sports exchange programmes to increase female access and opportunities to sport worldwide.**

As the Global Sports Mentoring Program participants come to the United States, they work with their mentors and other partners to develop an action plan for their home communities. As evidenced by the multiple stories of participants in the program from the previous section, the women are largely responsive to this call to action and have done their part in seeing it realized. Many of them have either gone on to revamp programs they were already involved in or started new programs entirely. As a result, hundreds of women and girls around the world have had opportunities to participate in sports that they may not have had without these particular women answering their call. Sports Visitors and Sports Envoys similarly hope to see increased access and opportunities. Envoys often take part in clinics and similar activities that allow women and girls to see the value of sports and be involved in these unique situations. Visitors are often already involved in sports but see the value and power in their opportunities to an even greater extent.

**To enhance cross-cultural understanding.**

A key component of the Initiative as a whole is its ability to use sports to transcend and overcome boundaries. The most prominent of those boundaries that it can potentially overcome is that of cultural boundaries. In the Global Sports Mentoring Program, approximately twenty women from different countries come together to learn from other women with diverse backgrounds. With so many countries involved, there are inevitably major cultural differences. Using sport as the common denominator, these women are able to relate to each other and

understand further the plight of other women who deal with similar yet unique challenges. With Sports Envoys, American women travel to other countries and hope to similarly use sports to make connections and relate to women from other cultures. Sports Visitors are often similar in that they bring women and girls to America while often bring multiple groups from different countries. Though it may look different from program to program, each aspect of the Initiative is able to further cross-cultural understanding.

**To use life skills training to promote personal and professional development of women.**

Particularly in the Global Sports Mentoring Program, participants are involved in mentorship in professional settings during their time in the United States. By pairing the participants with women who are experienced in a corporation or organization related to sports, the women are exposed to different types of professional settings and mentored through the development of their action plan. Furthermore, many of the women speak to feelings of greater empowerment and an increased understanding of the potential they have to be a change agent. In terms of personal development, this is important as they return to their home countries and hope to inspire other women and girls in similar ways.

**To encourage critical thinking about gender equality, inclusion and human rights.**

One of the key facets of each of the programs of the Initiative is promoting discussion and encouraging dialogue about the issues and challenges for women and girls around the world. Though sports are incorporated in such lessons and discussions, each program incorporates modules that involve gender equality, inclusion, and human rights including topics like disability sport, access to sport, and the universal right to play. Especially in the Global Sports Mentoring Program, participants take part in lessons and activities before meeting with their mentors in their respective cities. While many, if not all, of the women who are participants have thought

about and considered these problems before in their own contexts, having perspective from experts and other women and girls around the world even furthers their understanding of such problems and how best to deal with them.

**To assist females in becoming active agents of positive change.**

Arguably the most difficult to define and yet perhaps the most important goal is achieved as participants return to their home countries and see themselves used as a tool for change. Though what change looks like varies from community to community, the stories of participants in the Global Sports Mentoring Program reveal that the Initiative has been successful in accomplishing this particular goal. Despite the fact that the stories were limited in scope and in volume, even the few that are currently available reveal at least some level of effectiveness. These women that have seen change occur since their time in the program and with the support of the network that it has established are evidence that the Global Sports Mentoring Program and the lessons and values it incorporates are important as well as effective.

**Recognition**

**Awards and Accolades.** In addition to the evidence from the interviews and various programs that have happened as a result of the Initiative, one can also find its successes in its praise and recognition. The most prominent of this recognition was the identification of the Global Sports Mentoring Program as one of the best public diplomacy efforts of 2013 by the Public Diplomacy Council (Alapo). Ranked ninth overall, the Public Diplomacy Council noted that the Global Sports Mentoring Program was their choice for the best specifically sports-related diplomacy effort of the year (Carlson). In response to the recognition, Assistant Director of the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society Dr. Ashleigh Huffman stated, “It’s unique because it’s a public diplomacy initiative that emphasizes the importance of women as athletes and

change agents. It's a launch pad for understanding how sports and politics interface and how sports can be used to make a political impact" (Alapo). As some of the other diplomacy efforts recognized included "Pope Francis's decision to live modestly by paying his own hotel bill and reaching out to the poor...and Embassy Jakarta's high-tech cultural center in an Indonesian shopping mall, which has engaged more than 480,000 visitors since 2010," this was a significant recognition and one that displays the ultimate success of the Initiative (Alapo).

Along with the Public Diplomacy Council recognition, the U.S. Department of State and espnW were presented with a 2013 Signature Spirit Accolade by Women in Cable Telecommunications (DeCastro, "EspnW and U.S. State Department Awarded Signature Spirit Accolade for Global Sports Mentorship Program"). The Accolades "'honor exceptional operators, programmers, and a civic entity that champion community and public service programs in support of women's initiatives'" (DeCastro, "EspnW and U.S. State Department Awarded Signature Spirit Accolade for Global Sports Mentorship Program"). In response to the award, former Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Ann Stock affirmed the vision of the Initiative by stating, "This program increases the number of women and girls that participate in sports worldwide. We know that women and girls who participate in sports are more likely to achieve in life. And, when they fully participate in society, they help create strong, stable and inclusive communities" ("DeCastro, EspnW and U.S. State Department Awarded Signature Spirit Accolade for Global Sports Mentorship Program").

These two particular examples of awards and accolades speak to the success of the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative and the Global Sports Mentoring Program especially. While recognition and awards are not the only measure of a successful

Initiative, it certainly is reflective of the attitudes toward it. When a program is received as positively as this has been, it allows for greater support and impact overall.

**Further Honors from the State Department and espnW.** While each of the women that has participated in the Global Sports Mentoring Program has a vision and goals for her home communities that is valuable and has tremendous potential, in the spring of 2014, the U.S. Department of State and espnW recognized five participants from the 2013 cycle to be honored more specifically. Each of the five women was awarded a grant “based on the strategic action plans they created to use sports to address gender, socio-economic, and class inequalities among underserved girls and young women in their home communities” (DeCastro, “espnW and U.S. Department of State Honor Five Global Sports Mentoring Program Alumnae”). Their action plans were created during their time in the U.S. with the Global Sports Mentoring Program, with the eventual goal being to return home and seeing that action move forward to implementation. In recognition of the significance of seeing the action plans being realized and the awarding of the accompanying grants, espnW Vice President Laura Gentile stated:

We are thrilled to see the multiplier effect at work through the power of the Global Sports Mentoring Program. Women from around the world are using the experience they gained during their mentorship to truly make an impact in their home countries... Empowerment through sports is at the very heart of espnW’s mission, and these five honorees perfectly demonstrate such empowerment. (DeCastro, “espnW and U.S. Department of State Honor Five Global Sports Mentoring Program Alumnae”)

The five women honored embody the goals and visions of the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative. Through their personal drive as it was coupled with support from their mentors and the network developed in the Global Sports Mentoring Program, they are able to use

sports as a tool for improving the lives of women and girls in their home communities. The women honored are Luz Amuchastegui from Argentina, Hayam Essam from Egypt, Majidah Nantanda from Uganda, Zola Ndlovu from South Africa, and Yu-Hsien Tseng from Taiwan (DeCastro, “espnW and U.S. Department of State Honor Five Global Sports Mentoring Program Alumnae). Their programs include a mentoring program for at-risk youth using field-hockey classes, an after-school basketball program that teaches life skills, soccer clinics and coaching seminars that incorporate other types of education, a multi-sport program that uses education and mentorship, and workshops that help physical education teachers better serve the LGBT population while promoting gender equality (DeCastro, “espnW and U.S. Department of State Honor Five Global Sports Mentoring Program). While these programs are fairly recent in their inception, they have seen success that will only be furthered by their reception of grants from the State Department and espnW. In recognizing their potential for continued success, these women from the Global Sports Mentoring Program ultimately speak to the effectiveness of the program and the type of change and action that it can inspire.

### **Personal Perspective**

Though not ever officially on staff at the University of Tennessee’s Center for Sport, Peace, and Society, I spent a fair amount of time volunteering my time to support their work as well as conducting research for different programs. As such, I can attest to both the passion and charisma of the staff there as well as the potential that their programs have to result in real change both in the lives of individual women and their respective communities.

The research I conducted was fairly broad in scope and often helped the Center to prepare for certain programs. For example, when the Center was dealing with a Sports Visitor program, I was responsible for organizing country-specific packets that informed the staff of details of the

political, social, and economic context that women from that country would be dealing with. This allowed the program and its support staff to be proactive in developing materials as well as careful with the way they dealt with participants. This theme of dealing with each program as an individual project, rather than assuming that there was a one-size-fits-all way to go about dealing with these women was and is very important. Sports diplomacy seeks to use a certain tool to be able to forge connections across social and cultural boundaries, but understanding what those boundaries look like allows for a more successful initiative. Furthermore, it allowed individual women and their related communities to see more potential for change based on their own circumstances.

In addition to preparing country packets, I was able to assist them in transcribing many of the interviews for the Global Sports Mentoring Program. To hear about the way that sports were used as an empowering agent in the lives of so many of the participants was not only encouraging to me, but spoke to the potential that sports diplomacy has when it is coupled with a multiplier effect. As participants develop their Action Plan and hope to see it realized, they have the ability to take what they learn during their time in the program and further enhance the way they see real change happen in their communities. Though the majority of the women involved in the program have a sports background and work in sports in some capacity, being pushed to promote the potential that sports have to other women and girls in their home communities is virtually invaluable. In theory, the woman who participates in the Global Sports Mentoring Program would go on to implement her Action Plan, which would then inspire other people in the community to be empowered, involved citizens that work toward social change. While difficult to measure, one can intuitively see this as a possibility and from what I have heard from the various women involved, I can see this progressing into actuality.

In addition to my more technical support, I was also able to be involved first-hand in a couple of the Sports Visitors programs that the Center implemented. Through the Multi-Nation Basketball program, it was evident that participation in the same sport had the potential to provide a common bond even in people from countries with very few commonalities. Argentina, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Nigeria, South Korea, and Turkey share very few facets, but by the end of their time in America, it was evident that the women had developed lasting relationships while gaining confidence in their potential to be change agents. Furthermore, during that program, Council member Michelle Kwan and the coaches that were visiting participated in a panel discussion that highlighted different personal perspectives. Having the opportunity to attend the panel and the Visitors' entire day at the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame with Ms. Kwan was insightful as I saw first-hand the relationships and promise that they had as a group. The panel provided students and the University of Tennessee community as a whole a chance to learn more about the Initiative as well as to witness the participants and Ms. Kwan's dedication to seeing sports realized as a diplomatic tool.

As well as the Multi-Nation Basketball program, I was able to work with the Brazil Soccer program. Unlike the multi-nation program, this program featured just participants from a team in Brazil and the team's coaches. As such, the themes of the program were different and focused on concepts like environmentalism, disability sport, and community service and involvement. By using sports to incorporate those themes, the team was able to see its power and develop a joint action plan for their return to Brazil. Hearing perspectives from young girls who were spurred on to want to change their community was both enlightening for me and revelatory that such programs are effective and do have the ability to promote change.

Overall, my time with the Center and the programs that they implemented demonstrated on a personal level that the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative is effective. Though only on a person by person basis, I was still able to see and hear for myself that sports were being used as a tool for cross-cultural understanding, that real empowerment could take place in such programs, and that the ability to serve as change agents in a number of communities was being encouraged. This reflection of such an Initiative at the individual level speaks to its potential to be effective beyond simply those who actually participated. Inevitably, participants who develop an Action Plan and see it realized will be able to impact many people in their communities who may impact many people beyond that scope.

### **Implications**

Though the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative is housed within the U.S. Department of State, its implications have been fairly global in scope. By engaging women from countries all over the world, the program has seen huge success that, intuitively, will be multiplied with implementation and action on the part of those women who have directly participated in the programs. Beyond that, however, the program's success implies the need for its continuation, as well as the potential for the success of similar programs.

As the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative is unique in the way it allows for collaboration from the U.S. Department of State, espnW, and the University of Tennessee's Center for Sport, Peace, and Society, it speaks to the potential that this type of partnership has. Having support and provision from the State Department and espnW, while entrusting that the Center for Sport, Peace, and Society will be sufficient and successful in implementing the goals and programs of the Initiative allows for each branch of the partnership to play to its own strengths to see the common goal realized.

In addition to the unique partnership, this Initiative also has implications for the goal of employing a fuller range of diplomatic tools. While sports may be a lesser known and less developed diplomatic tool, this program revealed that it can be very useful in helping the U.S. to engage in people-to-people diplomacy. Though sport is somewhat unique in its ability to break down a variety of barriers, there are inevitably other mediums that have yet to see their full potential harnessed. By understanding the way different means may be used to reach the eventual end of diplomacy, there may be the potential for success using other tools in the same way that sports have been successfully used in this particular Initiative.

### **Final Conclusions**

During her remarks with ESPN President John Skipper on International Efforts to Empower Women and Girls through Sports, Secretary Hillary Clinton noted that the partners of the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative hopes in such a way that:

...we want to find ways to get more women and girls on the field, the court, the track, in the pool, the mat, wherever their interests and talents take them so that they can discover their strengths, develop their skills, experience that special satisfaction that sports can bring, win or lose. And we believe in the positive effects that can flow out of that experience for girls and women across their lifetimes, and, by extension, for their families and communities. (“Clinton, ESPN President on Empowering Women through Sports”)

This statement, delivered at the announcement of the Global Sports Mentoring Program, speaks to the ultimate goals of the program and what it sought to achieve. Given the successes of the Global Sports Mentoring Program, the Sports Envoys programs that have taken place, and the Sports Visitors program that have occurred, the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative has been effective. The women who have participated in the programs of the Initiative

generally leave feeling empowered and with a focus on their potential to take real action to inspire change in their home communities. While difficult to quantify these effects, the responses of the women involved as well as the action they have already taken demonstrate that the Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative has been effective and will most likely continue to see positive influences and outcomes around the globe.

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