



FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE SKI
INTERNATIONAL SKI FEDERATION
INTERNATIONALER SKI VERBAND

Female Leadership in Cross-Country Skiing

This publication has been produced by the FIS Sub-Committee for Ladies' Cross-Country. We hope this will contribute to the development of your organization and improve the state of Cross-Country skiing worldwide.



The state of female involvement in international-level sports

With the exception of a few typically female dominated sports (gymnastics, figure skating etc.), there are more male than female athletes, coaches and officials participating in the Olympic Games and World Championships. Although many areas of the world have seen improvements in female participation, there are still many barriers that need to be addressed for girls and women to gain equity in sports. Barriers to female participation in sports include:

- Fewer female athletes and officials as role models
- Girls' self-esteem and body image especially during puberty
- Male dominated sports-world
- Male dominated culture and structures
- Competition is considered "unladylike"
- Availability of childcare

Why do we need more women involved in sports organization?

Having women in positions of leadership in sports' organizations contributes to:

- A balanced atmosphere
- A unique approach to addressing problems and completing tasks
- More female role models for a younger generation of girls and women
- Gender equity in sports
- Greater success

What can be done?

To achieve a more balanced situation for women in sports, work has to be done at regional, national and international levels.

Start locally

Address the issues on a daily basis with the people you work with, other officials and people in positions of leadership in your area.

Assess the situation

What are the issues unique to your area? Create a working group to manage the development of women in your federation that can identify where more support is needed. This can be done by implementing a simple questionnaire to assess if there are:

- Special activities for girls
- Support programs for interested female coaches
- Support programs for female Technical Delegates
- Women in positions of leadership

Build a support network

After identifying barriers to the progress of women in your National Ski Association, set up a support network to address those barriers. Support can be offered through building a network to discuss common problems and ideas for overcoming them. This can be achieved by activating an internet platform, organizing seminars, observing other sports and meeting with other female sports officials.

Use models from other National Ski Associations

Find out what initiatives have been successful for other National Ski Associations and incorporate relevant ideas to the support you offer your club, region or nation. An example of one such program is included here as a case study.

Case Study

“Project Female Cross-Country Leadership in Ilsetra (NOR)”

In 2006, Project in Ilsetra (NOR) was launched by the Norwegian Ski Federation (NSF) on initiative of former elite athletes Bente Skari and Guri Hetland because there were no female officials or coaches at the highest level in the organization. This project aimed to recruit and train former female Norwegian National Team athletes and ski club coaches to become leaders, coaches and support personnel at the elite level. Two-day camps were held in 2006 and 2007 with a total of 50 participants over the two years.

The program

Group sessions offered opportunities for women to network, set goals, and identify barriers to women holding jobs with the NSF. They discussed what issues needed to be addressed to facilitate more women working in the Federation.

Education sessions and presentations were conducted by NSF leaders and trainers. The sessions included the following topics relevant to women coaching and holding positions of leadership at the elite level:

- Coaching pedagogy
- Training elite athletes
- Communication with athletes
- How to prepare to work for the NSF
- Improving the performance of a ski organization

Follow-up initiatives

Several long-term initiatives were developed to offer participants continued support and information throughout the year. These included:

- The implementation of a networking group to offer further communication and training
- The creation of a newsletter with information about the NSF and National Team, job vacancies, and training information
- Starting a resume/CV database of former national team members
- Invitations to future NSF seminars
- A mentor program for women who want to be involved in the NSF

Results

The NSF began to reap the benefits of the project in Ilsetra within months of implementation. Some of the participants of this project were already engaged in different roles in the NSF (waxing, health and organization) in the 2006-2007 ski season. Furthermore, more women were trained as coaches, officials and leaders and more female volunteers were in positions of responsibility within the NSF.

Conclusion

The Sub-Committee for Ladies Cross-Country believes that there must be steps taken to develop women in positions of leadership in Cross-Country skiing and in all sports. To be successful in this mission, all nations need to work together to share information and support one another.

In an effort to more effectively share information world-wide, the Sub-Committee for Ladies Cross-Country will create an internet website to share relevant information among National Ski Associations from around the world. Through building this network, we can exchange ideas and experiences and organize common activities to help further women in the sport of Cross-Country skiing.

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