

## **WORLD NETBALL POSITION STATEMENT**

### **MALE PARTICIPATION IN NETBALL**

Updated December 2022

World Netball has consulted regularly with its Member nations at Congress, the biennial meeting of the Federation, regarding male participation in netball. A position statement was developed in 2009 to articulate clearly how men and boys were involved in our sport. This statement has been reviewed and updated in the intervening years.

In 2021, during the development of its Strategic Plan for the period to 2024, the World Netball Board has reviewed this statement. In consultation with Members, the Board has agreed the following Vision “*Our sport is open to all and inspires netballers to embrace opportunities and achieve their potential*”.

The Board has now revised the Position Statement as follows:

#### **World Netball Position Statement on Male Participation in Netball**

Netball is a sport that was developed by women for women at a time when their opportunities to participate, compete and achieve through sport were very limited.

With this relentless and bold attitude, netball has provided leadership and empowerment opportunities to women, and this continues today in both developed and developing netball nations. At its core, Netball is a voice for women and girls in sport, and then seeks to be a voice for others that choose to authentically be part of netball. World Netball recognises the importance that netball plays in this, particularly (but not solely) in developing nations, and will not compromise these opportunities.

Netball engenders a culture of nurturing, caring, collaboration, teamwork, fairness and fierce defence – this can be seen in the rules, the structures and philosophy of netball. Netball authentically acknowledges its roots and the resulting philosophy.

World Netball’s Mission is to expand netball’s global reach and impact, building on these foundations, and strives to have a structure that embraces anybody, regardless of sex, gender, ethnicity or religion that wants to be part of netball and embrace netball’s philosophy. We will grow our sport, our way, for the benefit of all.

The terms ‘sex and ‘gender’ are used purposefully in this statement and are based on the World Health Organisation definition. The meaning of ‘sex’ refers to “the different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females, such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, etc”. The meaning of ‘gender’ refers to “a person’s individual gender identity and corresponds with roles, norms, and relationships associated with masculinity and femininity”.

This statement does not explicitly consider positioning on sex-neutral competitions (sometimes referred to as ‘open’ competitions), particularly at an elite level. This is noted by World Netball as a topic for further discussion moving forward within the netball community and for World Netball to define a position on this.

## **Governance & Leadership**

- World Netball is recognised globally as the sole governing body of netball and by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).
- In line with its Articles of Association, World Netball formally recognises one (1) 'Regional Federation' per World Netball Region (Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe & Oceania) and one (1) 'National Netball Association' as the 'sole controlling and governing body for netball in a country'. Therefore, constitutionally no other organisations may receive formal recognition from World Netball. As such any organisation representing any gender or sex (male, mixed, transgender or otherwise) specific group is encouraged to be recognised formally by the relevant World Netball Member in line with the individual Member's constitution. World Netball does not intend to review its Articles of Association in this respect.
- Formal recognition will depend on the Member's Constitution / Articles of Association and local regulations. This may include, by way of example only member status, formal affiliation, memorandum of understanding and so forth.
- World Netball and its Members will, first and foremost, seek to attract people with the appropriate skills to participate in netball leadership, coaching and officiating regardless of their sex or gender.
- World Netball acknowledges the part Netball can play in redressing the global inequity in the number of females involved in leadership, coaching and officiating positions in sport as a whole. As such, World Netball encourages its members to promote female participation in these roles.
- In identifying people for leadership roles in Netball, it is crucial that the philosophy and values of Netball as described is held central in the skills and experiences sought.
- World Netball will explore the potential of netball for all sexes and genders with its Members and Regions by establishing a Working Group.
- World Netball Members should in the first instance engage with organisations that are sanctioned by the respective World Netball-recognised National Netball Association for international exchanges.
- World Netball will survey World Netball Members on a biennial basis to monitor the involvement of different sexes in netball, including mixed netball to inform World Netball's GROW strategy.
- World Netball will ensure that any governance structures including Board sub-committee(s) that focus on GROW and PLAY, will reflect this positioning statement in their terms of reference.

## **Participation & Competition**

- World Netball will encourage its Member nations and Regional Federations to create an environment that provides participation opportunities to all sexes in Netball, while respecting and embracing the philosophy of netball. World Netball Members retain the right to decide their own position and guidelines on this participation to reflect population demographics, facility capacity level, netball development resources, local legislation and social direction.
- The published 'Rules of Netball' clearly state that the Game may be played by teams made up of players of the same gender (read 'sex') or may be mixed

(Appendix D(i) – Variations for Other Levels of Play).

- Individual events will identify whether they are for same sex or mixed teams in their event regulations.
- World Netball recognises that up to about the age of 12, participation competitions can include a blend of boys and girls. From the age of about 12, growth and developmental differences indicate that teams should either be sex-specific teams, or mixed sex teams, with specific sex ratios.
- World Netball, in maintaining the philosophy behind the rules of netball, doesn't intend to adjust the rules for specific sexes.

### **Performance and elite competition**

- Netball has a history of providing performance and elite competitions for females in sport. World Netball first and foremost will ensure that Netball continues to provide these opportunities for females, and encourages its Members, likewise, including consideration of resource and investment focus.
- World Netball encourages Members and Regional Federations to develop pathways and elite competitions to support the performance development of males, where facilities, resource, investment and local conditions are supportive of this.
- Consistent with the positioning regarding Governance and Leadership, Members' men's national representative teams must be formally recognised by the Member.
- World Netball intends to recognise the national honours for Members' men's teams, including international caps, wearing of national coats of arms (where relevant) or other national colours, in representation of their country.
- World Netball intends to recognise Members' men's national representative teams in an international ranking system to support selection for international competitions and tournaments.
- World Netball intends to develop international events with national representative teams for males to support the development of male competitive pathways, recognising that the development of pathways is a joint responsibility between Members, Regional Federations and World Netball.

### **World Netball commits to:**

- Work with Members and Regional Federations to gain an accurate and up-to-date picture of the netball participation demographic including the sex spread in Netball across all roles, including governance, administration and game development.
- Work with Members and Regional Federations to collate information on their position on men's and mixed netball and details of any organisation involved in the running of men's and mixed netball.
- Review this position statement on a regular basis, at least once in each 4-year cycle, based on the information gathered and in consultation with its Membership.

### **Actions regarding men's participation delivered since 2016:**

- Established men's and boy's participation number in netball through Membership survey
- Included a positive statement regarding male participation in the Netball 2020 strategy plan 'We recognise the appeal of netball to men and boys and we welcome their growing participation in our sport.'
- Ongoing promotion of men and boy's netball participation in netball through World Netball digital communication channels in stories and imagery.
- Reviewed the Terms of Reference for World Netball Committees and technical advisory panels to add a statement on embracing diversity.
- Considered the gender balance of the officials appointed at World Netball events and the Commonwealth Games.
- Engaged with the emerging leaders in men's and mixed netball.
- Reviewed and updated position statement (in 2018 and 2021).
- Agreed a strategic priority for the period 2020-2024 to Embrace boy's and men's participation without losing netball's unique position (USP).
- Reviewed and updated this Position Statement, supported by member focus groups in 2022.
- Introduced Men's invitational teams into World Netball FAST5 Netball World Series in 2022.