

Rights, Sport & Disability Podcast



Transcript

AFK:

Thank you for joining me today for this very important conversation, where we will look at the intersection of sport, human rights and disability.

We're coming together because last month the United Nations Human Rights Council launched a major report. The report was put together by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and it was looking at the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in physical activity and sport – as is outlined in Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Persons with Disabilities make up roughly 15% of the world's population. For those of you not already familiar with Article 30 of the CRPD, I'll point out a few things. It specifically calls on governments to encourage and promote the participation of persons with disabilities, in both mainstream sporting and disability specific activities. It also notes at all levels and on an equal basis with others. Furthermore, it talks about ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to sport, recreation, and tourism venues. It also states that children with disabilities must have equal access to participate in play, in recreation, leisure, and sport activities – and this includes in the school system.

This report is a big deal. It's being published at a time when the worlds of sport and human rights are starting to come together. But with that said, there is still a significant gap when it comes to understanding and recognising human rights violations and their impacts on persons with disabilities. Disability has remained largely invisible as a human rights issue and this is even more pronounced when it is combined with, or through the lens of, sport. We're going to try to shed some light on this, but before going any further I would like to acknowledge that we are living in a pandemic. It would be remiss not to mention COVID-19 and the impact that it is having on sport for persons with disabilities. The Centre has already done a podcast on the intersection of COVID, sport and disability, so if you are interested in that topic, I encourage you to check that out. I'd also like to clarify that in today's discussion we are going to be using the word 'sport' generically-speaking to cover all different forms.

So, since we only have a short time for this conversation, let's jump right in. I will start by introducing each of our panellists briefly.

First, we have Facundo Chavez, he's the Human Rights and Disability Advisor for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. He's a renowned human rights lawyer and disability advocate. He's been a leader of many, many organisations of persons with disabilities at the national, regional and international level. He is someone that I, personally, continue to learn a lot from in my career.

Next, we have Susan Masila, currently Manager of Government Relations and Global Development for Special Olympics for the Africa region. She has a background in exercise and sports science, she's been with Special Olympics for 14 years in many different roles, including National Director of Special Olympics Kenya. She brings a wealth of experience in disability and sports policy and partnerships, and she is the lead for Special Olympics on safeguarding in Africa - a topic that we will definitely be discussing today.

Shalel Tennah is the Special Olympics athlete from Kenya. She has been with Special Olympics since 2011. She competes in swimming and in cycling. She attended and competed in both the world summer games in LA in 2015, and in Abu Dhabi in 2019. She has two silver gold medals. She also currently serves as a board member of Special Olympics Kenya and she's a coach with the Young Athletes Program. She's worked as a Teacher Assistant and she's an entrepreneur.

Then we have Juan Pablo Salazar, who's the governing board member for the International Paralympic Committee. A passionate global activist for the rights of persons with disabilities, he's held many high-level positions, internationally, in the Americas region, and is in his home country of Colombia. He's a very accomplished sport administrator, having served as Chef Commission of the Colombian delegation for the Beijing 2008 and London 2012 Paralympic Games. He's also past President of the Colombian Paralympic Committee,

Last, but not least, we have Eli Wolff, Director of Disability and Sport International in the Power of Sport Lab. He's a leading researcher, educator, and advocate for sport and social justice, diversity, disability and inclusion. He was a member of the US Paralympic soccer team in the 1996 and 2004 Paralympic Summer Games and I have had the privilege of working with Eli since 1999.

So with that I hope we can get into a really rich discussion on all matters related to sport, rights and disability. I'd like to start off by asking Facundo to please help us understand some of the top messages that have come out of this report because Facundo was very much at the lead at the drafting and pulling together this very monumental piece of work. So, over to you Facundo.

Facundo

Hi Amy, and thank you colleagues for having me in this podcast today. If you have to have three takeaways out of the report, I would resume them the inclusion in structural design and in equality and non-discrimination. When we are talking about inclusion, we're talking about the participation of persons with disabilities in their communities - in any community where they live, including, if that's the case, a sports community. Unfortunately, there's a reality of what's happening to persons with disabilities is that sports it's largely relegated to rehabilitation. This is kind of portraying what had been the historical thinking that a person with disabilities need to be fixed to be part of society and no other approach in terms of community integration or inclusion - it's actually a substitute for that. That's exactly the opposite of what's happening in reality. People with

disabilities engage in physical activity as everybody else - walking around, going to work, engaging in education. That's the large piece of our exercise in everyday life. So, inclusion, I would say, it's the main highlight of the report. The second point is guiding States on what to do, and guiding States of what to do means having a structural design that tackles the idea of achieving objectives for persons with disabilities, that will help to develop, once you can define these objectives, that will help you to develop the structures to meet those objectives and then to have those procedural enablers that will allow you to actually get there right. So, the structural design, I think it's the important part of the report as well. Finally, the big piece or the most substantive contribution from a human rights perspective, is the angle that is taken from equality and non-discrimination. Through the document you will see a number of references to these aspects, and when we're talking about it, we're talking about not being excluded from sports. Ending any exclusion requires always acknowledgement of what's going on and action so we can move forward into a better world. Another big piece of the report that you will see - it also as a cross-cutting issue - is the exclusion of women and girls with disabilities and particularly what is happening to persons with intellectual disabilities, which are far, far behind the rest of the community. The final points I would say, that it's also crossing equality and non-discrimination, is violence and abuse. Unfortunately, the issue of violence and abuse, because of how societies commonly operate, and this is manifested pretty much everywhere, has a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities, and women with disabilities, and children with disabilities unfortunately are much more exposed to the risk of violence.

Amy

Thanks, Facundo. Those three points are really important and I think they're going to continue to come up as we talk. Can I ask you a follow-up question, since you talked about some of the groups that are facing more challenges, and I'm thinking of children here? I know that the report talks about how public spaces and playgrounds should be available for everyone to use, and that governments should make sure that children with disabilities can play sports and do sports with their peers that don't have disabilities - you know both in school and out of school. But is there anything else that the report brings to light when it comes to children, or is there anything else that we can emphasize here?

Facundo

Yes, I think what the report does - is what many times it's not taken into consideration - it acknowledges the agency of children in the way that they want to engage with the community. So, it is this shift from (this is not only happening to children with disabilities it's actually something that happens to all children), but what it really does is to say children are subjects of rights as every other person with disability and they have agency to decide on how they will achieve and on how they will develop their engagement with their communities. That implies engaging with other children with and without disabilities, and at the same time implies giving them the opportunity to be in places where they want to be. This unfortunately also, is also connected to the rehabilitation perspective, where parents decide for children where they should be going and unfortunately, they follow the same logic that exist in society. So, there is a very strong push to put children in these situations against many times of their own desires and that has proven to be not only ineffective, but also harmful in many cases to the development of children. The other

aspect that I think it also highlights in the report, is the issue of having structural safeguards for children with disabilities to participate in safe environments. An enabling environment is not only a place that is accessible, it's a place that is embracing the diversity of children with disabilities, and that it's also offering structurally outcomes that are healthier and looking at what should be done in terms of putting together a series of measures that will deliver for them. So being exposed to these enabling environments, it benefits the children themselves, but it's also to the benefit of the community where they participate. Being exposed to persons with disabilities at an early age continues to prove to be the most effective way of dismantling the stereotypes and build a narrative of disability that is diverse in nature and not the single angle story.

Amy

I love that last point. It is so true. It is so important for us to have everybody in our communities and to see it from a young age. I personally grew up in an inclusive school setting and community setting and it definitely changed my viewpoints. So I'd like to turn now to Juan Pablo and see if you have anything else that you'd like to point out about children, based on your experience or the report.

Juan Pablo

15.05

First, I would like to complement what Facundo was saying at the beginning - of the of the main things. I think the important headline today is that the report exists. That in itself is a very, very powerful political message, for both the human rights world and the sports world. These were two planets that were divorced for far too long, that speak very different languages. For us who know a little bit of both, it was so intuitive and so common sense - why are we not using sports as a tool for the human rights movement and vice versa. Sports is maybe the most powerful platform to convey difficult-to-understand messages of the CRPD, so having a report that is showing with actions - because in the in the human rights world this is an action, this is a Human Rights Council meeting that will be around Article 13 and sports is unprecedented and historic.

The specifics - well, we couldn't be in better hands. We have the great Facundo Chavez landing the technical aspects of this and making sure that it's thorough and that this is not only about elite sports, but recreational. We want to stay away from the medical model, but it's also true that there's a lot to do with rehabilitation and sports, so that is also an aspect. Then we land to next question, so that's a big headline for me - the historic thing is that we have a report on disability and sports of the Office of the Human Rights Council. That's amazing. Now, coming to intersectionality, this report, as with all the other tools of international law, interact with each other. Facundo just told us that this explicitly talks about safeguards and this is something we should implement. The world has been shocked after the huge scandal of US gymnastics - we all know it doesn't stay in the US or in gymnastics - this goes throughout, and children with disabilities are not away from this terrible, terrible risk. The report mentions doing safeguards, but we can go further to the work UNICEF is doing regarding those safeguards. That is where organisations like IPC are looking to implement. We are still in the early stages - the reason it has taken so long for the CRPD world, the human rights world and the sports world to come together, is because they were two movements that were in early stages, or maybe that's unfair, because this comes from the amazing work of people from decades ago. But I do think it's

fair to say that the CRPD only now has the maturity to tackle sports in a direct way and see how it can be used to convey the messages and look for the cultural change the CRPD is aiming for - and also the sports world. IPC is right now a very big organisation, our Paralympic Games are the third most important sports event in the world from broadcasting and consumer data. This wasn't the case 10 or 15 years ago, we were struggling to grow and to become, but now that we became the big organisation and the big movement that we are, we are ready to understand the broader purpose of sports for people with disabilities - which is to achieve inclusion and to bring inclusion through the world through sports.

Amy

Thank you, Juan Pablo. I have lots of thoughts and follow-up questions, but I'd like to bring in Eli first and allow him to expand anything else he would like to say on children. Then I'll jump back in. So, Eli do you have something you'd like to add?

Eli

Thank you, it's wonderful to be a part of this and just echoing all the comments that have been made about the significance of the report that it exists. But I just wanted to focus in on the children aspect. When we were drafting early on with Article 30 and recognising how important that is, that in many ways that's the essential core - young people, children, that right to play, that right to be involved with sport, recreation and physical activity. To have those options to be able to be included along the whole spectrum of inclusion and have choices. Really, it's about a child and a young person being able to dream, to be able to dream about those opportunities and about being involved in sport in different ways. For history, there's been this exclusion, the children have not had those opportunities or they've been on the sidelines, or they've been in mascot roles, rather than being in really essential participant roles or ways that they're really engaging in meaningful, rightful ways in in the sport context. In many ways, it's really the core aspect of Article 30.

Amy

Thank you, Eli. It is a critical component of it and it is highlighted. I'd like to turn to Susan. Susan is with Special Olympics Africa, and she's actually the lead on safeguarding for the African region. So, following on what Juan Pablo was talking about Susan, if we could shift and talk about this question around what came up in the report about violence and abuse. Then we can go back to some of the other groups that we want to talk about today. The report emphasises that persons with disabilities and especially girls and women, face a higher risk of psychosocial, physical, sexual violence and abuse than others. The sports culture really presents a scenario where you have this imbalance of power between athletes and managers and in our case there's also this unique dynamic between an athlete and their personal assistant, or their assistant on the field of play, and so I'd like to just dive a little bit into this and ask what can sport federations like Special Olympics and IPC, or what can governments do, to really prevent, monitor and act around this violence and abuse in sport? I just want to highlight that this isn't just an issue for children - this isn't this isn't an age specific issue, there are adults who are also going

through this. Susan, could you please elaborate for us and share what you think that they could do?

Susan

Thank you, Amy, and thank you for having me in the podcast today. Before I even go to the girls and women with disabilities, I think it's important to note that in most cultures a girl child is born with a burden of existence. They will have to experience multiple vulnerabilities and multiple discriminations. When we put that in the context of a girl or a woman with disability then it becomes even more complex, because they have to go through discrimination as a woman or as a girl, discrimination because of the disability and when we compound with other issues like race, religion, culture then it becomes a very, very complex. So, when we think about what confederations do and as all of us governments and I think the community as you mentioned, I don't think this could be a one or a straight line or a linear reaction or a linear attention to it, but we need to look at the existence of the girls and the women. There's so much against them and that's why they are more vulnerable to all the exploitation – sexual, physical, emotional. One of the things is to open up the space for the girl to be able to participate actively in sports, and to feel like we belong here – we are not just you know visitors in this space, but we belong here. I think with that, then there will be other structures that will support that girl or woman to be in the sports space. When you look at the opportunities that exist for the girl and the woman, they are so limited such as you mentioned, such that when they find themselves at the centre of their attention around sports recreation and all those opportunities, they don't want to take that away from them. Things might happen which they'll be in a code of silence because they think they will not be able to participate in their sports. So, one thing is to open up the space for the girls and put up structures that support the girl, then the other thing is diversification of sports activities – not only for the federations but for every player. Why? Because there are a lot of stereotypes of which sports women and girls can participate in and what they can't do. That also creates another barrier for them and makes them more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. But if they have that diversity from grassroots – actually I'm speaking from a grassroots local level up to the global level. The other thing I also think is if we open up the space that means we are paying attention – deliberate attention – to making sure that the girl or the woman with disability can participate in a safe environment. This means we need also to have investment towards that commitment. I just want to draw a very brief example – in 2020 just before COVID hit the world, before we went to the first lockdown, we did hold our first ever pan-African games in Cairo, Egypt. This was at an eye-opener, because there was a deliberate intention to include female, there was a deliberate investment and there was a deliberate action to make sure that women participate in a safe environment. What did we achieve? We achieved 50% of players – both women with disabilities and men with disabilities – participating. To summarise the question as I said it's not linear, so we need to look at cultural barriers, for example, in Africa there are some cultures that will feel it's the fault of the woman that this and this happened. So, even if you go to report nothing will happen. There are also the legal barriers, for example if it's a sexual abuse – and I'll give an example of intellectual disabilities – when you go to report they will say 'oh, we need evidence, we need all these things,' and this girl when that happened maybe they did not know whether I have to preserve this and this for evidence. Actually, one interesting thing around this intellectual disability is also when you look at the way the legal framework will interpret sexual abuse, they mostly say it was not consented. Now, this is maybe a girl or a

boy - because now it's both genders - they have intellectual disabilities, probably they've not been trained, they don't have the awareness of their own body and they walk to watch this man or woman and they they have whatever they do with them the law will say they consented. But you can look at their intellectual cognitive capacity - that was not consent at all, but there's nothing you can do. So it cuts across so many issues in society which are mostly addressed in the Declaration of Human Rights and also the CRPD, so for this we should not just look at article 30, but I think we look the entire document and also use the other legal documents to accompany that. I hope I've answered the question, thank you.

Amy

Susan, that was really rich. Yes, you've answered it, and you've highlighted a couple things which is that this isn't just a girl's issue, this is for both genders and also people who identify as other on the spectrum of sexual orientation. Also, I just, this whole point about legal capacity, I don't know if Facundo can make a brief remark about how inclusive and accessible the reporting needs to be and how we need to ensure that people with disabilities do have the ability to voice what's important. So Facundo could you add something?

Facundo

I think that's actually a very, very key aspect. The first one is, as it happens today, generally in the women's rights movement, we need to believe when personal disabilities are denouncing violence or sexual abuse. We, of course, need to acknowledge that everybody has different mental capacities and that's something that we acknowledge and systems need to be in place to support a person with disabilities to express and to come forward and to say what they need to say. At the same time, we need to be respectful of the sexual rights of persons with disabilities and not assume that because you have an intellectual impairment or psychosocial disability you cannot engage in a sexual relationship that is actually consented. So, how do we address those issues? Well, basically we need to have better systems and the systems are the ones that will be providing for the necessary safeguards and at the same time, the enablers for people with disabilities who have a life that is sexually rich as well.

Amy

Thanks, Facundo for that perspective. Would anyone else like to touch on girls and women before we move on? Okay, I was just wondering if Juan Pablo, if there was something the IPC was doing that you wanted to mention?

Juan Pablo

Well, I'm far from an expert and always prefer women and girls to talk about women and girls, but IPC does have a Women in Sports Committee. We do strive for specific indicators of women in leadership roles. I know that my colleague Rita Van Driel, who chairs that Women in Sports Committee, has this on her radar. Having women as agents of the changes they need to see throughout our movements. So, we do strive for equity in leadership positions and we do have this on our plate. We do know that there are high risks going on and there's actually a whole committee on safeguarding, that again we're trying to abide to the to the directives of UNICEF. So, indeed it is on IPC's radar but I feel far from being an expert on gender issues.

Amy

Thank you so much for coming in and sorry to put you on the spot. Now I think we should get a little bit practical. This report talks about certain roles that different groups play. So, I'd like to go through some of them - we're not going to be able to cover them all today, but I'd really like to start with the role that athletes play in moving this agenda along. For that, I'd like to bring in Shalel. Shalel has been engaged with Special Olympics as an athlete since 2011, so she brings a very important perspective. I'd like to ask you Shalel, what do you see as the role for athletes with disabilities, Special Olympics athletes, or allies even, but right now we will focus on athletes to increase the inclusion - so over to you.

Shalel

Thank you, nice to be here. So, athletes should speak up on positive and negative experiences. You should never only talk about the negative, also talk about the positive that's happening. You should be both sides. Athletes should be put on off this crisp. Athletes should be put in the decision-making. If you're going somewhere, we should also be in the decision, not only coaches. Say we are going here, so that's the plan, we should also be included. Athletes should mentor young athletes, because as a teacher assistant, I was mentoring them and I was also doing in Kangwa, a small slum, so I used to mentor the small athletes, their mothers and everything else. Athletes should be role models, like you should tell the young athletes, 'I went through what you're going through,' but you should mentor them and give them hope that you will reach where I am right now. I have a small business, you can also own a small business.

Female athletes should be given opportunities like sports, the majority of the sports that we have - in basketball or football - it's majority of the men who participate. If you go for a game, maybe one spot will be only women, and the men will be having like four or five spots in them. So, you should include ladies, so they're not doing only individual sports like cycling, swimming, athletes, they should be equal.

Amy

Thank you. You touched on a really important point, which is that we need to consult with athletes, if we are sport administrators, organisers, governments, sponsors. We really need to consult with athletes to know what you want and where the problems or the issues are. So, for example you brought up having equal number of opportunities for girls and women to participate in sport and perhaps some people don't recognise that that's an issue if they don't consult with athletes and see that there is this imbalance. Indeed, athletes have a key role to play as mentors and role models and Eli, I know that you work a lot on mentorship, so I'm going to pivot to you and ask as a para-athlete as well, if you have any thoughts on the role that athletes can play to move the agenda along.

Eli

Yes, for sure, I'll be interested to hear also other colleagues. I think it's a really important area, having worked in athlete advocacy across the board, you know for the last 10 years or more. It's really interesting to see that athlete voice and I think we see it quite a bit. We see it in with gender with women, female athletes speaking up and being vocal about equality and non-discrimination. We're seeing of course a lot with the Black Lives Matter

movement, and I think that it's really important that athletes with disabilities are able to speak truth to power, to be able to address inequities and human rights. But I do think that there is a level of education and mentorship that I think that in many ways the athletes with disabilities may not feel as comfortable or knowledgeable or aware or really informed about why and how to be vocal and how to have athlete voice. So, I do think there's a level that's I think a little bit different when you see race, gender, LGBT, and then disability - I think disability is kind of on the up curve and we're seeing that there's more and more opportunities and need for athletes to speak out on human rights on different levels of both grassroots, local levels, just about the right to play and being able to access your communities and your facilities and then all the way up to more national or international environments. I think athletes being able to be supported in that and not being silenced, but I think being able to listen and hear. But I do think that there's an interesting aspect of empowering and mentoring and supporting athletes with disabilities. Even to learn about article 30, and even to learn about these aspects we're talking about today, I think there's just that growth of the movement and being able to get people engaged. I'm really curious to see what others think as well.

Amy

Thanks Eli, and I know that the IPC has done a lot in the athlete villages in previous games to promote and educate people about Article 30, so I want to bring in Juan Pablo and see if you have anything else to add.

Juan Pablo

My thoughts on that is that there should be a different differentiated engagement platform for athletes. At the end of the day, all these movements are about them - I mean the lead sports organisations like IPC it's about the experience of athletes achieving their maximum excellence. So that means that they will get a platform, if they want to use that platform, or to put that platform at the service of the broader human rights agenda, that's fantastic and it's very much welcome. But I think they're also entitled to not do it, I think that's fine. Meaning the cameras are on Muhammed Ali's face because he won the Olympics, and he's the best boxer in the world, and he can choose to use those cameras in his face to promote civil rights for African Americans in the U.S. or he cannot and both are fine. If he chooses to do so it's very useful. If he doesn't, I'm very much in the same page with Eli, he should at least have some basic literacy on the struggles of his own community. So, you have different tiers, you have the athletes that are super-committed, super-informed, that that are media savvy and that you know are good enough to get cameras actually on their faces. Those for us are maybe the ones we're most looking for, to work with, to promote these messages around Article 30. There's a second tier of athletes, that maybe are not super-committed - repost stuff on their social media - but they are aware. Then there's a third tier of athletes, that don't know and don't care or no, let's say they don't care, they know there are people with disabilities, but they are training to be the fastest or are under competition and they need to focus just on that and they don't want to do anything else and that's fine. I mean, the lifespan of an athletic career is very short, so if they want to use their eight or 12 years that they're doing sports and at elite level just to win the medal, I think that's fine and respectable. What we don't want is athletes that don't know the issues of the community they belong to. We do struggle in the Paralympic villages and in other types of engagements we have with them, we work closely with the Athletes Council to give them give them some basic literacy on what the

CRPD is, what is this whole human rights and people with disabilities thing, and what is the part and the role that athletes could play if they want. But again, I think it's important that athletes don't feel pressure to become the next Kaepernick of the disability movement - because that also comes with costs. The athletes of the civil rights movement in the Olympics of 1968 - Mr Smith and Mr Carlos, who did the black power fist, they were stripped of their medals and their sports careers ended that day. Their symbol will stay forever and their lives will always transcend, because of that very powerful symbol, but their athlete careers ended. So I understand if an athlete sees this trade-off and doesn't want to. What we need to do as organisations, is the athlete that is engaged, and wants to use his platform, we need to give him all the tools to do so properly - and by properly I mean aligned with the values and objectives of the CRPD. So that's where we are.

Amy

Indeed, knowledge is power right? So, you have to be aware of what that power could lead to and you also need knowledge just to advocate for your own rights. I think that's the basic premise here which is if we can educate them about the CRPD when they're at the games and they go home to their home country, then they can figure out where their advocacy and their voice fits, and where they can ask for what they have the right to. So, I'm going to move on to states. We've touched on states, but Facundo, is there anything with the role of states or governments that you think we should just highlight today.

Facundo

It's key for states to have a strategic plan, to define clear objectives, assign responsibilities, establish structural measures to counter discrimination particularly for women and girls, pair their budgets with the mainstream investment to avoid leaving persons with disabilities behind, establish safeguards against violence, define indicators to measure the structural procedural and outcome results, collect data to inform the indicators, implement a sound accountability mechanism to monitor and take remedial action towards meeting their objectives. All of this should be done in a participatory way and an accessible way and the strategic plan should both include public areas under the direct responsibilities of the states, as well as incentives, and not just to private sector, including through regulation activities. If you have that you can start walking the top.

Amy

Yes indeed, all very good points and I hope some governments are listening to this because they could get some pointers. Looking at the private sector, there's a lot here around sponsorship around sports. Juan Pablo, do you want to add anything about the private sector at this point, about the role they could play to advance human rights for people with disabilities in sport?

Juan Pablo

Absolutely, first they sponsor games so they enable persons with disabilities to actually do sports - so that's fundamental for our movement, all the allies and the funding that is around sports for people with disabilities. But once they get engaged private sector can do two things - one is mainstreaming within their own companies, so if we have a car company that sponsors the IPC, well they should look at themselves in the mirror, and we can help them to do so, to see how their HR policies or accessibility in their retail spots and what not, meaning they can do 360 consultations on how inclusive they are within their

own companies. Secondly, they can promote the messages of inclusion with people with disabilities under adverts, meaning why not see people with disabilities buying those cars and you know enjoying that beautiful beach view at the end of the commercial with the car that they're selling. We do have some best practices there, we do have a lot of also media partners from the private sector that cover the games, so that's also private sector that cover them properly meaning they understand the differential approach to cover athletes with disabilities and they do it properly. They move the agenda on a mediatic aspect which as you know, if the objective of the CRPD is to shift a culture, media is probably our most important ally, and media goes through private companies and through private broadcasters and we're on both.

Amy

Media has a huge role to play. I'm going to bring in Eli who has some experience in this area as well, thanks Juan Pablo.

Eli

I just wanted to quickly add just about the shift and the really exciting movement toward inclusion and universal design that we're seeing in the private sector and corporate sector. Some of the amazing companies that are coming on, like Nike with the FlyEase, and really seeing universal design and from a business standpoint the investment. Then you're also seeing the Valuable 500 and you're just seeing a really dynamic important time that is really reinforcing Article 30, to be able to really see the value of the private sector and how much disability is getting in there and becoming part of that universal design approach. I just wanted to share that comment.

Amy

I would love to see more sport-focused entities become part of the valuable 500 commitment - that would be amazing. I'm going to shift a little bit now to sport federations, you know we have both Susan from Special Olympics, we have Juan Pablo from the IPC. I'd like to just start off before I go to the IPC and Special Olympics, I'd like to start off - because there's a recommendation in the report that I think is really important and it's actually number 78, if anyone chooses to look at the report - and please bear with me I just want to read it for to make sure our listeners know what it says, and it says that local national and international organisations involved in sport, recreation, fitness and physical activity, should commit to the full inclusion of persons with disabilities and those that already have committed to human rights and non-discrimination overall, must explicitly include and address persons with disabilities. So, let's look at what this means for sport federations and I'd like to start just with that recommendation and Eli I want you to kick us off, and could you just tell us what that means?

Eli

I think it is really important - you're seeing many international sport federations, national sport federations, local sport organisations that have non-discrimination, diversity and inclusion efforts and the majority of them are still missing disability. They may say something about including all but they're not being explicit about disability, and I think that article 30 and this report really calls for that recognition and really the time is now, you know that disability gets to be more visible within the non-discrimination and human rights initiatives within sport. I think that's really what that means, it's really just to make

sure that any sport entity that's committing itself to non-discrimination and human rights, that they're really ensuring that the disability is part of that initiative and part of that policy process.

Amy

Can you clarify, do sport organisations have a responsibility to respect human rights and in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights?

Eli

Definitely, I think the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are really a clear guiding path and an indicator for the fact that sport organisations need to make that commitment and across the board and also that disability is very much a part of that commitment.

Amy

So, you just talked about that not every sport federation has disability mentioned. Could you give us a concrete example of a group that has left it out and what you think they could do to change it?

Eli

I know it's really interesting, I think there are quite a few across the board of international federations, even international - if you do an assessment, you can see that it's really missing across the board. But I think one that I think is really important in this conversation, is the International Olympic Committee, particularly because of their Principle 6 which is about non-discrimination, Principle 4 is more of a broad human rights commitment, that is overall. But Principle 6 really indicates particular groups and even in 2014 they added sexual orientation, but right now disability is not part of Principle 6, so I think it's really important that that, as setting a standard, really a guiding post, a leader in the sport movement, all of its collaborations across the board - Paralympics, Special Olympics, Deaflympics, but also considering that all the persons with disabilities, both as athletes, but also leaders, stakeholders, people with disabilities are throughout the Olympic movement, and disability is an element of that whole system. I think it's really important.

Amy

Great, I'd like to bring in Juan Pablo, do you want to add anything?

Juan Pablo

I would like to say that in general, I feel that the discrimination towards people with disabilities has a very different motivator than discrimination towards other social collectives. There's not a Ku Klux Klan chasing after blind people, no one feels that they're moral or religious beliefs are being challenged if people in wheelchairs want to get married or adopt children. So, I think that's good, because there is less associated violence towards the movement of persons with disabilities, as opposed to other movements, but it also has a very evil in disguise - and it is that it's easier to ignore. They don't hate us, but they say 'What, yeah of course we include people with disabilities,' can they walk that extra mile and be more explicit about it and see that this comes to reasonable accommodations and to changes here and there that they have to do in their policies, in

their infrastructures - I think it is. So, it comes down to what you said before, which is information is power, and we need to inform more of all these federations that I'm sure don't hate people with disabilities or don't discriminate with like an evil or nefarious motivation, but could do a better job. So, yeah, I totally agree.

Amy

I totally agree, I think some could just do a better job at being explicit and being there is a recognition that we need for each of our groups. Susan, do you want to come in and add?

Susan

I will just continue with the last thread from Juan Pablo. For sports federations, as you said knowledge is power. I think one of the areas to start providing this knowledge and making them more inclusive is demystifying the stereotypes about disabilities, because sometimes as Juan Pablo mentioned, sometimes it's not inclusive because they don't know what to do. There is a perception that you need to have very specialised equipment, you need to change the entire system to include persons with disabilities. So, it starts from educating the federations first, demystifying those stereotypes and championing and advocating for universal designs. At the end of the day, actually the universal designs are even cheaper than implementing separate programs and then the other thing, I want to just write again on what Eli talked about the clause in IOC, you see national federations many times they follow what the international federations are subscribed to. So, if the international federation has not subscribed to explicit disability support then the national federations will be a little bit relaxed and they will not have any attention to that. So, it's important... but again the national federations can also start practicing some of these policies because I'm sure all these national federations, for example, are also governed by other legal aspects in their own countries and areas of jurisdiction. Maybe, for example, in your country there's a law about disability inclusion, you can still start with that even if your international federation has not told you what to do. Then we can have top down both top down and also from grassroots to up. I just wanted to share a brief example - when Special Olympics started in the 1960s, we were a sports organisation for persons with intellectual disabilities. Then we moved, this is a sports organisation led by persons with intellectual disabilities so that evolution is also helping us change our perception. So, we are not working for but actually we are, when you look at it we are just a support, the leaders are those athletes with intellectual disabilities. So, I think it can either start from top or down. The other thing is policy federations and sports organisations have very beautiful policies sometimes, but they are never implemented. So can we have also a focus into implementing these policies and starting the work at the grassroots or from whatever angle which works - whether it's from international to grassroots, horizontal, vertical, whatever angle that works.

Amy

Susan, those are all really important points - the trickle-down effect, the trickle-up effect, implementation not just representation. So, I want to talk about that. I want to talk about athletes and persons with disabilities have a role in leadership positions in sport. I'm going to ask Eli and Juan Pablo if they want to make a comment, if anyone else would like to just jump in and let me know but you know it's really going beyond people with disabilities just being the token athlete. I mean there's so many more roles and leadership roles and Juan

Pablo is a governing board member at the IPC, for example and a person with a disability, so do you want to start us off Juan Pablo, and how important is it to see yourself in a leadership role?

Juan Pablo

Well, we all love the 'Nothing about us, without us,' so that needs to be very well implemented in IPC. I will tell you this however, which I find fascinating, it's not mandated in IPC, meaning the board, or the president, or the vice president, we don't have it like in our bylaws that it should be people with disabilities. So, what we have seen is inclusion of people with disabilities in leadership roles where you have an environment of inclusion by default. We don't need to teach inclusion to the 160+ National Paralympic Committees in the world that are the biggest chunk of our membership - we also have federations and other organisations - but the biggest chunk is Paralympic Committees, which are DPOs, you know it's organisations of people with disabilities that maybe are not in the human rights discourse of their country because they're sports-aimed, but they're organisations with people with disabilities at the end. So, I think there are a bunch of non-spoken agreements that we will have our leadership with people with disabilities, but our current President doesn't have a disability, our vice president does and we're fine with that, because there is very thorough representation in the governing board, in the staff, in the different administrative roles that IPC has in classification, in I'm thinking of doping and maybe I'm not sure of that one. Well, anyway, on all our structure there is representation of people with disabilities and I think that is fundamental, because it's us people with disabilities that know the particularities of people with disabilities doing sports. So it's very technically oriented as well, maybe not so human rights approach, but more like, okay, you need to understand what blind people need as a reasonable accommodation in a swimming pool is this and not that and the classification and the competition should include this and not that - which is very specific to sport. So, for us, it is fundamental and we will try to keep it that way.

Amy

Thank you. Eli, do you want to add something?

Eli

Just briefly, I wanted to add just how important the leadership piece. If you're looking at change factors of what influences change, not only for disability, but across the board of human rights and social justice, one of the key components is about representation in leadership roles. Just that in and of itself, is so important both within the disability adaptive sport, but also in mainstream sport roles. Just to have somebody with a disability to share that expertise and that perspective in the boardroom, and in the leadership positions, because if you're not in the room then you're not able to share the message, you're not able to influence. Just across the board and disability as well, I think one of the main factors critical change factors of the progress of human rights and sport for disability is that leadership piece.

Amy

Thanks Eli. So, there's so much more to talk about - there's a role of civil society organisations and parent groups and you could just go on, but I would really like to wrap

this up with a round robin. I'm going to ask each of you to come in and tell us one word, one phrase, one line, one message, that you want to get out to the world today, about what's needed or where we were we are at. I'm going to kick it off with Susan.

Susan

Thank you, Amy. I think, for me, two words come out very strongly. One from the report, one and I repeat what Facundo started with - inclusion is the key word from this report. I think we need to start, everybody needs to start, focusing on inclusion. Secondly, the other key word is empowerment of the athletes with disabilities, because I think we are coming from an era where people will say we are the voice of the voiceless, so we need to empower them to be their own voice as we've all discussed in this call. So, for me those are the two key words - inclusion and empowerment.

Amy

Thanks so much, Susan. Juan Pablo?

Juan Pablo

I think the headline this year is celebrate the marriage between human rights and the sports movements. We're coming strong!

Amy

I love it. Eli?

Eli

Just briefly I think just this landmark report, 10 years plus after, just how significant it is raising the bar within the world of sport and human rights - to echo Juan Pablo. Also, I think just recognising the moment, the movement of progress, that even though we are backwards and forwards and forwards and backwards, but we are moving in a direction toward inclusion and I think that notion of representation of inclusion, of non-discrimination, I think all the more leaders we're seeing, all the progress, the changes in the medias. So, I feel really positive and just so appreciative of this report and just celebrating it, but also just how significant it is for the future.

Amy

Thanks Eli for sharing. Facundo over to you. What main message do you think we should take home today?

Facundo

John Lennon used to say that life is what happens where you're busy making other things, so I think it's important to pay attention to what's happening around us. Not only what is happening to persons with disabilities, but to what is happening in this momentum. It's a very important and interesting moment, as Juan Pablo was saying, that it's bringing these two communities to work together to look at the future together, and pay attention and to ask yourselves questions. Where are women with disabilities, where are persons with disabilities? Are the places where I'm engaging accessible. So be curious, keep engaged and keep growing.

Amy

Thank you so much everyone for those comments and your messages. To conclude, I want to reiterate that we all have a role to play in moving this agenda forward, to realising the right of people with disabilities to participate in all forms of sport at all levels, from early childhood to adulthood in both mainstream and disability specific settings. Let's be totally clear, the world of sport must be proactive in ensuring that persons with disabilities have equal access. As an athlete, as an organiser, as a spectator as well, and on an equal basis with their peers. I hope you have heard today that it is not just the disability community, or disability specific sport organisations, that have a responsibility to act. We must all do our part to raise awareness and bring visibility, so let's make this part of a larger conversation.

Thank you Facundo, Shalel, Susan, Juan Pablo and Eli for joining me today and for sharing your valuable knowledge and expertise. I am in awe at all of your experience and knowledge. Thank you to everyone listening to this podcast, and we hope that you have gained a deeper understanding of the issue and the actions that can be taken to create change.

Ends
