

## **Women's Football in the Horn of Africa**

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An observer of the 2010 African Women's Football Championship final tournament held from October 31 to November 14 in South Africa might have noticed the absence of teams from the Horn of Africa. West African teams were there. South Africa hosted and took third place. Tanzania and Algeria tried. But there were no teams from the Horn of Africa present. Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya were in fact in the preliminary rounds. Tanzania knocked out Ethiopia in those rounds and then defeated Eritrea in the next round. Eritrea had advanced that far because Kenya withdrew before a whistle was blown. These less than auspicious results suggest that the women's game is struggling in the Horn.

Football has deep roots in the countries of the Horn of Africa – Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan. Ethiopia and Sudan were founding members of the Confederation of African Football. While neither the men's nor women's national teams in any of the countries of the Horn are highly ranked internationally, football remains extremely popular throughout the region. And more and more women are playing football whether in organized leagues, school tournaments, informal games, or grassroots programs.

This study explores the development of the women's game in the region documenting the state of the women's game and analyzing the situation across the countries. I examine the role of sports federations such as FIFA, CAF, and CECAFA (the Council for East and Central Africa Football Associations) and the influence of governments and NGOs especially in the context of the sport-and-development movement. Football is also situated comparatively with other sports that women have been involved with such as running (e.g., Kenya and Ethiopia elite long distance athletes) and netball (especially in schools). The relevance of specific histories, politics, cultures and religions as well as regional dynamics are examined. As a preliminary project laying the groundwork for further studies, special consideration is given to methods and sources and how these impact an understanding of the state of women's football in the Horn of Africa.