

Coach Development

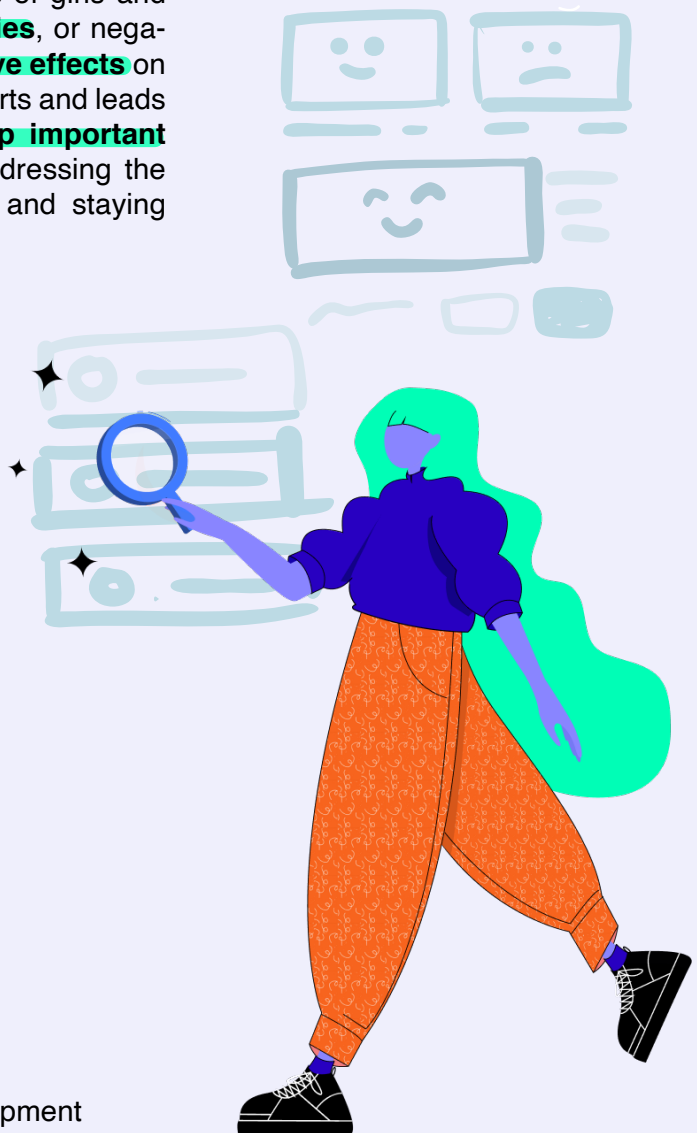
All over the world, more and more girls are getting engaged in sport and play. But research shows **that girls start sports later and drop out earlier than boys**, which can be a **result of gendered expectations** of girls and women, family or **community responsibilities**, or negative experiences with sport. This has **negative effects** on girls' ability to reap the benefits of playing sports and leads to them **missing opportunities to develop important life skills**. Coaches play a huge role in addressing the barriers that girls face to getting involved and staying engaged with sport.

Where are **you**?

This section of the International Guidelines will explain the importance of coach development in the success of sport programmes for girls.

In this PDF, you will explore the following topics:

- 01 Importance of a Good Coach
- 02 Coaching Approach
- 03 Importance of Woman Coaches
- 04 The Impact of having Woman Coaches
- 05 Recruiting Women Coaches
- 06 Tools and Resources for Coach Development
- 07 Allyship



01

Importance of a Good Coach

The success of a girls' sports programme lies in the hands of coaches and their approach to coaching. **Coaches are the main source of interaction with girls**, and can make all of the difference in how the girls experience the programme. Inspiring coaches will not only help girls develop sport skills but also be able to show participants how they can **transfer their experience in sport into empowering life skills**.

A strong life skills and sport coach should be:



Inspiring and supportive



Reflective of participants' community



Able to make sport fun and accessible for all participants



Able to connect sport to important life skills



A strong facilitator who is able to navigate sensitive and complex issues that affect the daily lives of participants



Knowledgeable of where to find resources on sensitive topics



However, many coaches in sport for development programmes are not adequately trained or prepared for their objectives. Often elite sport coaches, who may have expertise in technical training and sporting excellence, have little training on how to teach the valuable life skills that develop girls' leadership and empower youth. Facilitators who teach and develop life skills at various development organisations may have a deep understanding of what it takes to empower youth but have little training or knowledge of how to teach the basics of a certain sport. It is crucial to provide an environment where a coach feels like they can learn and improve, whether that means improving their technical knowledge of the game or learning how to link sport with life skills and lessons.

02

Coaching Approach



what is a coaching approach?








A **coaching approach** refers to the way that a coach engages with their team, the values and attitudes that they hold, the environments they create, the nature of their interactions with the players, and the goals and priorities they promote. Coaches play a huge role in the nature and quality of a sport programme for girls, and their approach to coaching has a large impact on girls' self-perception, motivation, and confidence.

With this responsibility, coaches who work with girls should pay special attention to coaching with a **gender lens** in mind. Coaching with a gender lens means creating girl-centred sport environments, and using strategies and approaches that support girls' interest and engagement in sport. While each coach may have their own unique approach to coaching, there are certain practices and strategies that will foster girls' interest and continued involvement in sport.



Image source: ICEF Rugby, USA

Strategies to Engage and Retain Girls

-  Creating a positive environment that encourages learning from mistakes
-  Encouraging girls to set personal and team goals
-  Emphasising skill-building through fun and healthy competition
-  Rewarding effort or trying a new skill over winning or scoring
-  Communicating using positive and encouraging feedback
-  Focusing time and energy on building supportive relationships within sport (with players, between players, and between players and others who are influential in their lives)
-  Ensuring that girls have access to safe and appropriate equipment and facilities

Coaches in your programme may already be highly skilled at creating these types of environments and sensitive to team dynamics, but, more often than not, these skills and strategies can be cultivated and developed over time. You should take a look at what your coaches' capacities and skills are and where they might need extra training in order to foster a holistic approach to using sport as a tool for girls' empowerment.

For more information on engaging and retaining girls, see:

[Coaching Girls Guide: How to Get \(and Keep\) Girls Playing \(WeCoach and Nike\)](#)

[Coaching through a Gender Lens \(Women's Sports Foundation\)](#)



03

Importance of Woman Coaches

Woman coaches, trainers, and discussion group facilitators are crucial to ensuring the success of sport programmes aimed at empowering girls. Prioritising women for these roles **creates leadership opportunities**, where such opportunities may otherwise be scarce or non-existent. In all levels of organisational leadership, women have a chance to strengthen decision-making, confidence and management skills over time. Having women in leadership positions both serves as an external representation of the programme's values, and demonstrates potential opportunities for other girls to strive towards.



Skiku, Inc., USA

Beyond just hiring woman coaches, it is important that coaches in your programme reflect the communities and populations that the girls are coming from with respect to race, ethnicity, caste, and socioeconomic class. This representational leadership is important so that girls and their communities can connect to your organisation and know that they are familiar with their context and lived realities. It also means providing access to opportunities that most marginalised groups have been traditionally excluded from.

In addition to coaching staff, gender equality should also be considered across your organisation, by encouraging and seeking female members of the board of directors, advisors and organisation administration. Female representatives on these decision-making bodies will help your organisation shape programmes based on what is best for your participants, keeping their interests in mind and serving as role models themselves.

04

The Impact of Having Woman Coaches

Individual Impacts

- Female role models positively influence girls' self-perceptions, self-efficacy, and sense of belonging.
- Having women as coaches challenges outdated stereotypes about gender and leadership.
- Girls can relate to the lived experience of female coaches and see themselves in their coach.
- Girls may feel more comfortable conveying their needs to woman coaches, trainers, and referees rather than male ones.

Systemic Impacts

- Woman coaches advocate for and help grow the number of women in the coaching profession.
- Woman coaches can provide advice and mentorship to other women about how to navigate traditionally male dominated workplaces.
- Girls and women who see other women coaching can see coaching as a legitimate and viable career.
- Men who respect women as athletes, players and sporting leaders within their own sporting sphere are more likely to respect women in other areas of their lives.



Case Study

Liberian football star and mentor, Dehkontee Sayon shares about her experiences of empowerment through sport. As the women's Football to Develop Destitute (FODEDE) coordinator in Liberia, she uses her experiences to mentor young girls in her community, empowering them to address the challenges they face.

Watch this video to learn more about her experiences:



05

Recruiting Woman Coaches



Coaches play a crucial role in creating gender-equitable and inclusive sports spaces, and woman coaches can actively dismantle stereotypes and gender norms about women in sport and demonstrate to girls that they should be included. However, across the world we hear from partners that recruiting woman coaches is a challenge. This is due to the disproportionate barriers to accessing and holding coaching positions that women face compared to their male counterparts.

Barriers

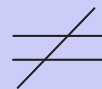
Identifying the barriers that prevent women from progressing in sports coaching positions is one of the first steps towards understanding not only how to recruit women coaches, but also how to retain them and invest in their professional development. Below are some of the barriers shared by our partners.



Lack of an inclusive sport culture. Women and non-binary people are not attracted to coaching positions due to the male-dominated environment (sometimes referred to as a “boys club”).

Inequalities in recruitment and compensation. Female and male coaches with similar expertise don't have the same access to incentives, paid coaching opportunities and equitable compensations (such as benefits, stipends, salaries, etc.).

Biased hiring and recruiting processes often lead to men being favoured for coaching jobs.



Structural gender-based discrimination. Woman coaches are more likely to face harassment, intimidation, and abuse (both on the sidelines and within sport organisations) due to their gender. This happens at informal, amateur, and professional levels of sport organisations.

Lack of appropriate equipment or spaces. Cisgender and transgender women who coach may not have access to quality facilities (e.g. toilets, changing rooms)



Lack of family support. Cultural and gender norms are often ingrained in the minds of family members, leading to a lack of permission or support for women pursuing coaching. This reinforces gender stereotypes that suggest that being a coach “is a man's job”. Often, sport environments and coaching schedules are not sensitive to expectations for women's unpaid caretaking responsibilities.

Challenges with menstruation management. Suitable and accessible toilet facilities are not always available, complicating the coaching experience for those who menstruate.





Double Standards. Women need to work harder to prove that they are eligible for coaching positions, particularly if they would like to coach men's teams.

Lack of access to training. In some countries, girls and women still have inadequate access to training, certification, and coaching development opportunities.

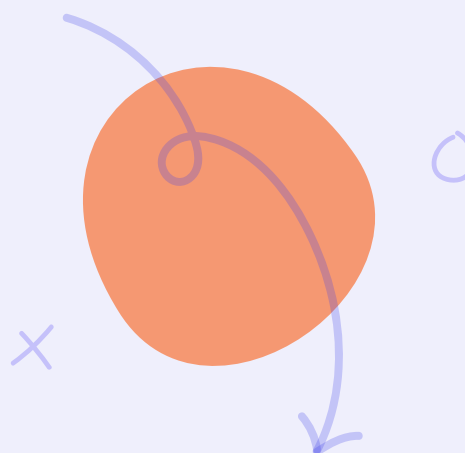


Unequal resources. For many organisations/clubs, sport programmes for boys and men have existed for much longer, leading to more developed programmes, better playing facilities, equipment, etc. in comparison to women's programmes.

Lack of role models. There are limited role models and mentors to support woman coaches to progress in sport, or even inspire them.



Fewer opportunities. Marginalised genders have less access to coaching opportunities. Not all organisations or clubs have female teams where they could coach. Women are almost never considered to coach male teams.



Consider

If you are a staff member within an organisation, run a session with your current woman coaches to detect the key barriers they are facing in your organisation. Each coach's experience is different and the answers may vary: everyone's personal experience is valid. Hear their stories with an open mind. Once you have identified the biggest barriers they face, look for similarities and differences. Ask yourself:

- Is there a common barrier coaches face in your organisation? This means it might be a systemic barrier. Find ways to remove these barriers internally.
- Are there unique barriers named by your coaches? These might be barriers affecting and impacting your coaches in different ways. After all, we are all different. Try to provide dedicated support and learn from each coach's personal experience to tear this barrier down together.

Tips for Recruiting Woman Coaches



Below are general tips and strategies to be able to overcome challenges to recruiting woman coaches, and should be adapted to your local context if necessary.

Internal Strategies

- **Build leadership pathways.** The most effective way of recruiting coaches is likely right before your eyes. Develop intentional leadership development opportunities for participants and volunteers within your programmes so they can acquire the skills to become a coach. Click here for a framework on how to build leadership pathways within your organisation.
- **Be flexible in your programme design.** If you have a sport in mind but can't find a woman coach for this sport in your community, reflect on why this may be and consider other design approaches that may be more suitable. This could be expanded recruitment drives, or choosing another sport. Is there another sport that is suitable for your participants and easier to find a female coach?
- **Consider hiring crossover athletes.** Sport-specific skills can be learned quickly with focus and a qualified instructor. Often, regardless of the sport, the athlete will already be aware of basic needs for participants, such as training or being a member of a team.
- **Give female coaches access to formal accreditation programmes.** Sometimes, woman coaches are asked to volunteer their time because they don't have the same formal coaching certificates or recognition from the government or other sporting bodies as men. By influencing sporting bodies and advocating for women, woman coaches can gain access to these training and accreditation processes. Through this, your organisation gains accredited coaches, and these coaches can negotiate salaries and earn a living through coaching in the future.

- **Share resources.** Partner and work with other organisations that need or have strong woman coaches and role models, and work with these women so they split their time between different programmes.

External Strategies

- **Advertise in the community.** Let the community know you are seeking woman coaches. Post flyers in community spaces and your social media channels.
- **Visit venues where sport is being played.** Visit local sport venues and meet women who are there, to recruit and get recommendations.
- **Contact the national sport governing body.** Many popular sports have national organisations that govern regulations, coaches, officials, etc. As a central headquarters for a sport, the people in this organisation often know of qualified coaches and can help you get in contact with them.



Image source: OWLA Program, India



Case Study:



Programme leaders at [MIFUMI](#) (Uganda) originally wanted to use karate as the sport focus for girls. However, they were unable to find more than one qualified karate coach who was a woman. Believing deeply in the value of women coaches, they decided to be flexible in their programme design and begin taekwondo sessions as they were able to recruit an experienced taekwondo coach who was a woman from a nearby city. There was an unexpected benefit to recruiting this coach as girls' participation increased. Some caregivers that were initially reluctant to let their girls participate in martial arts understood that they were not harmful activities after seeing other women doing it.

06

Tools and Resources for Coach Development

Coaches are one of the most valuable resources that any sport organisation has. Investing in this resource, through **training** and **continual development**, is essential to implementing a high quality and effective sport programme for girls' rights and equity in your community. Coaches will be interacting with participants on a daily basis and therefore need the training and support to be able to make a positive impact through their coaching and mentoring. Coach development should not be just a one-off training or handing them a manual, but rather, a continual process that accompanies the coach throughout their time with your organisation.

**Continuous
training**



**One-off
training**



It is important to note that woman coaches (or aspiring coaches) historically have less opportunities to access formal or informal coach training in many communities. It is therefore even more important to ensure that sport and girls' rights programmes are providing these opportunities. In many cases, our partner organisations have ended up recruiting female athletes or life skill educators and providing them with technical sport skills training, due to the lack of woman coaches in their community.

Tools for Training Coaches

There are several approaches, tools and resources that your organisation can use to support the continual development of coaches and facilitators. Some examples include:

- 01** Workshops and training
- 02** Manuals
- 03** Curricula
- 04** Mentoring
- 05** Observing and supporting the growth of coaches
- 06** Coach Certification Programmes

01 Workshops and Training

In person (or virtual) coach trainings and workshops are great ways to train many coaches at once in your programme's approach, curricula and in the technical aspects of the sport or sports you are using.

Coaching workshops and training can be focused on any aspect of the job, such as creating safe spaces for girls, teaching a specific skill, or how to recognise and address instances of gender-based violence in a girl's life. Internal training can help ensure that all your coaches are working within the same philosophy and are promoting the same values. These face-to-face meetings can foster powerful idea exchanges between individual coaches and provide opportunities for mock sessions and peer feedback.

Potential Topics for Coach Training



Topic

Details

◆ Technical Sport Skills Training

Historically, technical training in sport skills, rules of the game, officiating sport and coaching sport have been limited for women in many communities. Providing woman coaches or aspiring coaches a strong background in the technical aspects of a particular sport is important. Partnering with local or national sporting bodies (your country's sport federations) could be a great solution to provide high quality training to your coaches. Check in with local or international nonprofits that also might be able to support the technical portion of a coach training.

◆ Safeguarding

Successful sport programmes for girls have very clear expectations for all the coaches and staff within the organisation. Coaches are in a position of power and therefore every coach should sign a contract stating that they understand and will abide by your organisation's mandates. This provides for complete accountability in case of abuse or misuse of that power. The contract is also a valuable communication tool, demonstrating that both the administration and coaches understand clearly what is expected to create a safe space for girls. You should also be very clear about penalties for breaching the code of conduct. There should be a clear organisational commitment to "zero tolerance" for sexual harassment, violence or abuse.

◆ Facilitation and Group Management Skills

Coaches in a life skills and sport programme should have strong facilitation and group management skills. This is particularly important if your coaches are addressing sensitive topics related to certain girls and women's rights such as gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights and engaging in local advocacy.

◆ Curriculum Methodology and Approach

Every quality sport and girls' rights programme has a curriculum that coaches can use to deliver sessions to the participants. Coaches need to be trained in this curriculum, so they themselves understand not only all of the session content but also the methodology and approach.

◆ Leadership Development

Coaches themselves could greatly benefit from reflecting on and further developing their own leadership. This is particularly important to woman coaches as they often have not had as many opportunities to build their leadership. Reflecting and working on their own leadership will also help them better support the development of the leadership of participants in their program.

02 Manuals

Providing coaches with a written guidebook of technical information about how they are expected to lead girls is a great way to accompany an in-person or virtual training. Manuals often include programme rules and philosophies, ideas for drills and tips on practice planning. Most manuals are produced internally by programme directors and other coaches and include very specific information about sport-specific skills, facilities and local cultural considerations. There are also coaching handbooks that are produced by third-party providers, such as national or international sport federations and/or coaching bodies. Below are a variety of manuals available free online, focusing on different aspects of coaching in a sport and life skill programme.

- [Youth Development Football](#)
- [Goal Coaching Manual](#)
- [LA84 Foundation Coaching Education Resources](#)
- [Discover Football Coaching Manual](#)
- [Nike Made to Play Girls Coaching Guide](#)
- [Women's Sports Foundation Coaching Resources](#)



Case Study: Girl Determined, Myanmar

[Girl Determined](#) runs weekly Volleyball Circles led by community-based coaches in many parts of rural and peri-urban Myanmar, who themselves may not have volleyball or coaching experience. To support coaches with sport knowledge, Girl Determined created a Coaching Manual in Burmese. This resource provided coaches with game rules and explanations of different skills, illustrations of skills and stretches, technical skill advice to give to players, practice planning tools, and ideas for drills and games to run. This manual can be used to train coaches who may be new to the organisation, the sport of volleyball, or to structured sport programmes more generally.

03 Curricula

Besides technical training manuals, curricula that help coaches address life issues like gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, teamwork, or peer pressure are essential for coaches attempting to approach sensitive topics. Curricula usually define the sessions, key messages, activities, and discussion questions. This can sometimes look like a script but should be adapted and contextualised to each group of participants. Be mindful of language barriers: it's important to provide your coaches with manuals or curricula that are written in a language they fully understand. (For more information on finding and choosing a quality curriculum, see the [Curricula](#) section of this guide).

04 Mentoring

One of the most effective ways for coaches to engage in long term learning is through mentors. You should look for opportunities to pair up younger coaches with more experienced coaches. Learning “on the job” from mentors is an extremely effective way to improve coaching skills. Additionally, you should provide ongoing opportunities for peer learning and check-ins to troubleshoot and problem solve coaching and implementation obstacles as they come up. This could be regular meetings between coaches once a week, or once a month, depending on availability or your programme model. During these meetings, coaches can share best practices, obstacles, successes and support each other to find solutions and approaches in real time and be able to apply them at the next practice or session.

05 Observing and Supporting the Growth of Coaches

Regular observations and open dialogues are a vital tool in supporting a coach's growth and ensuring that they are positively serving girls. The process can be a learning experience for all involved. Rather than doing more formal top-down evaluations, try having a guided conversation with coaches around what they think their strengths and weaknesses are and what they think they need to improve and grow. Use the [360 Feedback Tool](#) to help you in these conversations.

06 Coach Certification Programmes

Offering coaches access to a certification programme (whether it is internally run by your organisation or through a partnership with an external organisation) allows you to further develop your staff. Certification can also allow your coaches to advance on their own career pathways in the future. There are lots of examples of certification programmes and many sport federations have their own technical sport coaching certification. Below are some examples of how other organisations have used certification processes to strengthen their coaches.



Case Study: One Win Leads to Another

One Win Leads to Another (OWLA) is a programme that leverages the power of sport to empower girls in Brazil. The programme combines quality sport programming and life skills sessions to build the leadership skills of adolescent girls living in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, improving their ability to influence the decisions that impact their lives. Its overall objective is to use sport to change harmful gender stereotypes and norms so that adolescent girls can fully achieve their rights. As part of the programme, implementing partner Empodera and technical support partner Women Win developed a certification and assurance framework to access and certify individual trainers and coaches. The framework contained:

- Organisational Certification – Organisations assessed on three certification levels: (1) Official OWLA implementing organisation, (2) Advanced OWLA implementing organisation and (3) Master OWLA implementing organisation
- Individual Certification – Individuals assessed on three certification levels: (1) Official OWLA coach, (2) Advanced OWLA coach and (3) Master Trainer

The framework will allow for the programme and curriculum to scale to new implementing partners and a variety of programme sites while attempting to maintain quality and effectiveness. The framework also allows for Empodera to support other organisations and partners with development plans and activities.



what does allyship mean?

Allyship is when a person of privilege works in solidarity and partnership with a marginalized group of people to help take down the systems that challenge that group's basic rights, equal access, and ability to thrive in our society

Careful selection of male coaches and facilitators that truly believe in girls' equality and empowerment, is paramount to making gender inclusion in your sport and rights programme successful. Although Women Win believes that recruiting and training women in coaching positions should be a top organisational priority, male coaches can be important allies and assets in the empowerment of adolescent girls. Including men in efforts to empower girls and women can be beneficial on many levels and help support greater change in your community.

Historically, men have had greater access to sport; therefore, they often have valuable technical knowledge to offer to girls. When teaching girls sport-specific skills, our partner programmes often call upon that expertise. Men who are truly dedicated to empowerment can work directly with girls and show them positive examples of cross-gender communication, behaviour and respect. They can bring a diversity of experience and perspective to your programme. Furthermore, having a male celebrate the strength and athleticism of an adolescent girl can leave a big impression on them and the community.

From a programme point of view, having caring, qualified professionals that embody the principles of your organisation and are dedicated to empowering girls, regardless of gender, is paramount. However, the presence of males, regardless of the individual, has the potential to compromise a girl's feeling of security within your space and reinforce their belief that men are in charge. If they have experienced gender-based oppression at the hands of a man, they will likely be reluctant to trust and share as freely as they would with a leader who is a woman.

In designing sport programmes for girls, it's important to be aware of both the risks and benefits of this dynamic to make sure the programme is a success.



Image source: Julia Larson



Consider



It is typically more comfortable for women and older girls to talk to participants about issues surrounding reproduction and menstruation than it is for males. However, most male coaches of adolescent girls will encounter occasions when a girl's full participation in a sport programme requires understanding, advice and education about personal and sensitive issues particular to females. For example, if a girl is menstruating and experiencing cramps, they must be able to communicate to their coach without experiencing shame. Or, if a coach notices that a girl is not performing to their potential because they do not have a sports bra, he must be able to offer them resources, if they are available.

Tips on Integrating Men into a Programme

- **Screen the men you plan to hire as coaches or administrators.** Interview them about their perception of girls' empowerment. Ask them about their experience in helping shape strong girls, as opposed to focusing simply on their technical coaching skills.
- If a male coach has **zero or little experience** with girls' empowerment, **limit his role** to occasional training sessions with another woman coach present.
- **Never allow men to train or travel with girls without an adult woman present.** For many groups, this can be financially and logistically difficult to achieve. If you have a male coach, consider asking a woman teacher, mother or community member to join in sessions on either a voluntary or paid basis. Create meaningful roles for these women, such as helping with equipment, organising transportation, communicating with parents or preparing food.
- **Educate girls about reporting gender-based violence or abuse when/if it occurs at the hands of men within the organisation.** Make sure girls have a trusted woman they can talk to who will help them contact police and/or third-party service providers (see the [Safeguarding](#) section for more information.)
- **Encourage girls to view men as partners** in their development, as opposed to controllers of it.
- **Establish open lines of communication around sensitive issues.** In initial group meetings, acknowledge that all coaches, men and women, understand that menstruation and sexual development is a healthy and normal part of girls' coming of age. Ensure that coaches respect and believe girls when they say they cannot participate because of cramps or other discomfort related to reproductive health.
- If girls are not comfortable using formal language around sensitive issues, **welcome them to come up with a code word** to communicate with all coaches, men or women, when they are menstruating.

- Adopt a **zero-tolerance policy** for **inappropriate interaction of male leaders with girls**.

- **Train all coaches**, women and men, on how to talk with girls about **sensitive issues**, such as sexuality, health and reproduction. Include gender sensitivity sessions in these trainings for all coaches so there exists an honest and open dialogue between male and woman coaches as well.

- **Maintain clear boundaries around discussions with girls**. Do not get into discussions about girls' sexual behaviour. If a girl needs to discuss sexuality and other personal topics, refer her to an adult woman within the programme.

- For more information on engaging boys and men in girls' sport programming, go to the [Community Engagement](#) section of this guide.





Game
over!