

Girl-Centred Design

Purpose

The International Guidelines are aimed at equipping anyone, in any country, who wants to empower girls through sport, with the tools and processes to be able to effectively design, deliver, and measure a sports programme for girls and young women.

Developing a sport programme that focuses on the transfer of life skills through sport, as well as one that addresses common barriers and challenges that girls face within their communities, will not only empower participants, but empower communities as well.

Where are you?

This section of the International Guidelines focuses on what it means to be girl-centred in your sports programme and how you can imbue this approach in all aspects of your session planning, design, execution and delivery.

In this section, you will explore the following topics:

- 01** Empowering Girls Through Sport
- 02** Life Skills Through Sport
- 03** Dealing with Barriers and Challenges



Image source: Kick Programme, Berlin

01

Empowering Girls Through Sport



Sport Empowers

Over the last several decades, sport has increasingly been used as a tool for empowering youth in developing countries. However, opportunities to participate in sport are often designed for, and dominated by, boys and men. Gender inequity and discrimination remain deeply entrenched and widely tolerated throughout the world, resulting in a devastating and cascading list of global, social, economic and development costs. Limitations placed upon adolescent girls and young women restrict them from fulfilling their potential and play a significant role in perpetuating global health and economic disparities.

We know that sport is empowering, particularly for girls, and challenges gender norms. Sport participation offers girls an opportunity to build their self-esteem, courage and self-efficacy. It is a place where they can take up leadership positions and bolster confidence in their own abilities. This translates into everyday life – it encourages them to take initiative, raise their voices and attempt things they never assumed were possible. When community members see girls achieve in sport, they often recognise their potential to achieve in other domains. Lastly, sport is a powerful tool and platform to strengthen social ties, networks, engage the community and promote positive messages. In short, wins on the field translate into wins off the field.



Through sport and play, girls:



Become physically stronger, healthier, and develop a greater ownership and understanding of their bodies. If a girl considers her body her own, she protects it, cherishes it, and demands that it be respected.



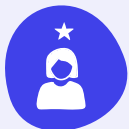
Develop critical life skills transferable to other spheres of life such as teamwork, goal setting, resilience and communication, all through the constant practice that sport requires.



Gain access to a safe space to grow and explore, especially through physical, social and emotional development.



Connect with peers and build support networks – a vital resource for dealing with the challenges associated with adolescence.



Learn from a positive female role model in the form of a woman coach or team leader. This provides girls with a caring, supportive mentor to help navigate adolescence and inspire a vision of what is possible.



Explore human differences and get connected to others from different classes, races, castes, or religions, which in turn can promote mutual respect and deeper understanding.



Capture the attention of the community. When girls play in public, they have an instant awareness-raising opportunity to advocate for their rights within the community. Victories, kits, and leadership positions can shift a girl's status within her community – from being perceived as a liability to a source of pride.



Have fun. It is so simple, but the sheer distraction from the pressures of growing up is an essential experience that we are all entitled to.



Sport and Leadership

A body of research suggests that asset-building programmes can result in long-term gains for girls and women.^{1,2,3} Our theory of change is built on the **belief that adolescent girls**, as well as their **families** and **societies, benefit from and are empowered by sport and sport programmes** that build assets, provide access to resources and develop agency.

Women Win and our work are both guided by the belief that all adolescent girls are born leaders. This belief serves as a foundation for all our programmes and activities. We believe that leadership is a set of skills, behaviours, and attitudes that can be learned, practised, and refined through experience, mentorship, and education. We believe that all girls have leadership capacities that will become evident once recognised and nurtured.

Women Win thinks about leadership in the following way:



Leadership reflects the ability of a girl or young woman to exercise her rights and drive change.

Our tools and resources help strengthen girls' and young women's leadership through the process of building five key competencies (Voice, Self Confidence, Vision, Action and Global Thinking).



Source: Jaspreet Kaur

¹ Brady, Martha (2007). Levelling the playing field: Building girls' sports programs in the developing world. Promoting Healthy, Safe, and Productive Transitions to Adulthood Brief no. 1. New York: Population Council.
http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/TABriefs/01_GirlsSports.pdf

² Lehman, S. J, & Koerner, S. S. (2004). Adolescent women's sports involvement and sexual behavior/health: A process-level investigation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 33 (5), 443-455.

³ Women's Sport Foundation Report (2009): Her Life Depends on It: Sport, Physical Activity, and the Health and Well-being of America Girls and Women

Sport offers a safe space for girls to discover, develop and practise their leadership abilities and ultimately apply their skills in the community. Through sport activities and girls' rights programming, girls acquire leadership skills, attitudes and knowledge, and develop an array of competencies. Together with our programme partners, we have identified **several core competencies** that reflect an adolescent girls' journey to becoming a leader for social change in her community. These are:

I TAKE ACTION

- Make decisions
- Solve problems
- Create and seize opportunities

I USE VOICE

- Develop and express own opinions and thoughts
- Speak in public
- Communicate to move others (storytelling, using social media, pitching an idea)

I AM SELF-CONFIDENT

- Identify strengths and celebrate successes
- Take risks and step up to challenges
- Fail forward

I HAVE VISION

- See the possibility for change
- Set goals
- Inspire and motivate others to action

I THINK GLOBALLY

- Have a Global Outlook
- Value Diversity
- Benefit from Unknown Environments
- Grow and Invest in Support Networks



Source: OWLA Program, Brazil

Why Invest in Girls?

According to UNICEF, there are currently 1.1 billion girls under the age of 18 globally.⁴ These girls are poised to be the world's next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs, and community change makers. Yet, girls continue to face enormous hurdles in a world that still largely favours boys and men including still being excluded from decision-making that impacts their lives. The most marginalised girls – those from ethnic minorities, indigenous groups and poor households; LGBTQIA+ youth; those living in rural or conflict settings; and those living with disabilities – face additional layers of discrimination.

International authorities, from the World Bank to the United Nations, agree that the **most effective way to fight poverty in the world is to empower girls and women.** Research has shown that if you invest in girls, you invest in society because the education, increased earnings, and human development of girls have a direct impact upon their families. Because women often serve as primary caretakers, every dollar invested in a girl also benefits her family and her community. When an individual girl understands her rights and believes in herself, she will improve her life and the lives of others.

⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/media/65586/file/A-new-era-for-girls-2020.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2011/09/22/getting-to-equal-how-educating-every-girl-can-help-break-the-cycle-of-poverty>

How Does Sport Advance Women's Rights?

Women Win uses sport as a strategy to advance women's rights with a focus on three core rights-based issues: Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and Gaining Economic Empowerment (EE). These approaches serve as the foundation for our guides, curricula and other tools as well as the basis for our girl-centric outcomes that show how change can happen.



what is gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence that is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex OR gender identity. It includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, threats, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life.

Addressing Gender-Based Violence

When girls participate in sport, they challenge the core tenets of GBV – inequity, patriarchy, and rigid gender roles. Beyond the social challenge, the application of sport in combating gender-based violence is practical. When girls play sports, they become physically stronger and healthier. They develop a greater ownership and understanding of their bodies. Psychologically, sport can enhance a girl's self-esteem and self-efficacy. The success a girl experiences on the sport field translates into her belief in herself off the sport field, and being a member of a team provides an additional support system for her. These life skills and networks contribute to a girl's ability to address gender-based violence in her community.

Accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Every girl and woman should have control over their own bodies and have access to health services, as well as having their needs related to sexuality and reproduction met. Supporting SRHR goals contributes significantly to a range of broader development goals, such as improving the status of women, contributing to economic growth and reducing poverty and inequality. Sport can facilitate the building of important competencies that support girls in not only gaining knowledge around SRHR but also in changing their attitudes and behaviours, which is essential for positive health outcomes. Essential life skills such as teamwork, cooperation, problem solving through communication, and relationship building are inherent to sport and also crucial for girls to realise their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Furthermore, quality sport programmes that include comprehensive life skills curricula are essential for girls to gain access to fact-based information about their sexual and reproductive health.

Gaining Economic Empowerment

A majority of the world's 628 million unemployed young people are girls and young women.⁶ Barriers caused by gender inequity often prevent girls from finishing their education and, consequently, building the skills they need to access decent work and break the cycle of poverty. A delayed marriage or living free from violence enables a girl, their family, and their community to experience better economic, health, and social outcomes. A sport programme can progressively build and strengthen a girl's skills and help them further develop personal and professional competencies that are required for economic empowerment.

02 Life Skills Through Sport

“Life skills” is often used as a very broad term. UNICEF defines life skills as knowledge, attitudes and abilities that equip individuals to deal effectively with the challenges of everyday life and become positive agents of change in their communities.⁷ At Women Win, we believe that it is important to take this definition a step further and include a **gender lens**. When situated in a sport for girls' empowerment programme, **life skills are skills that serve a girl in their life both in and outside of sport**, such as critical thinking, cooperation, empathy, and leadership.



Applying a gender lens to life skills development is crucial to being able to design a sport programme to empower girls. Although general life skills are important for everyone to develop, in order to combat gender inequality it is important that girls learn specific skills to empower them to recognise and claim their rights. For example, while decision-making skills are important for everyone to learn, it is particularly important for girls to understand their right to make their own decisions. This is because in many cultures, girls and women often do not have the autonomy or power to make decisions about their interests, their bodies, or their futures.

A sport programme can be the perfect place to learn, develop, and practise these skills. While there are innate benefits of the physical activity of a sport programme, these programmes also provide the unique opportunity to further develop specific life skills. Coaches and facilitators can intentionally incorporate activities, exercises or discussions that address specific life skills, significantly increasing the impact of the sport programme on girls' lives. In this section you will find descriptions of specific life skills that can be addressed through sport, and why they are important for adolescent girls. These life skills have been identified by Women Win's partner organisations and informed by our work with girls and young women around the world. This is not intended to be an exhaustive or definitive list of life skills, but can be used as a starting point for organisations looking to integrate life skills into their sport programmes for girls.

Go to the next page to find out more about these life skills.



⁶ Plan International. Young, Woman and Unemployed: The Triple Challenge. October 2015

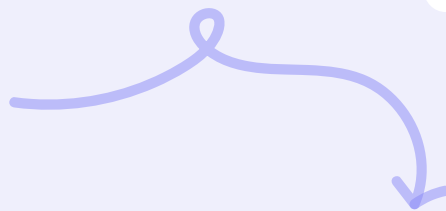
⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/media/64751/file/Global-framework-on-transferable-skills-2019.pdf>



Life Skills Explored in this Section:

- **Self-esteem and Confidence**
- **Self Awareness**
- **Leadership**
- **Negotiation**
- **Conflict Management**
- **Empathy**
- **Emotional Literacy**
- **Stress Management**

- **Resilience**
- **Team Work and Cooperation**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Decision Making**
- **Taking Care of Your Body**
- **Goal Setting and Time Management**
- **Financial Literacy**



Self-esteem and Confidence

What are self-esteem and confidence?

Self-esteem is one's subjective evaluation of their own worth or abilities.

Why are they important for adolescent girls?

In many communities, girls often lack spaces to build their confidence and self-esteem in constructive and healthy ways, particularly when it comes to communicating their needs and wants, exercising their rights, and expressing their emotions.

How can sport strengthen self-esteem and confidence?

Sport programmes help girls learn to use their voices in confident and strong ways, such as organising and coordinating with teammates during a match, demanding foul calls from the referee, voicing opinions and feelings to the coach during the match or at practice. Stepping out onto a playing field takes courage and confidence, and the more that girls play, the more they build their self-esteem. Learning new sport skills also builds confidence and self-esteem, helping girls realise that physical activity is not just for boys in the community, but that they too can learn and master the same skills.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- [Our Positive Qualities](#)

Girls Against Aggression:

- [Outer confidence](#)
- [Inner confidence](#)

Self-awareness

What is self-awareness?

Being self-aware means knowing one's weaknesses and strengths, understanding what is possible to improve about oneself and what one must accept in a constructive and critical manner.⁸

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

A girl's perception of her own body is at the very heart of her identity. If they dislike their body, or are not able to own and attach to their physical self because of trauma, impairment or negative conditioning relative to their size or shape, they will be inhibited from developing strength in any other aspect of their life. A girl who values their body is more likely to walk proudly, exercise bodily self-determination and feel truly empowered in daily life. Girls around the world are discouraged from loving the natural state of their bodies. The media is constantly presenting unattainable images of beauty, which lowers a girl's self-esteem if they feel they do not look like the ideal. Girls are often sexualised and objectified, leading them to believe that their bodies exist for the pleasure and judgement of others, especially men. If a girl has been sexually abused, they might detach completely from their body, the site of a major emotional trauma.

How can sport strengthen self-awareness?

Playing sport requires that girls be attached to their physical selves. They can feel their heartbeats, work on motor skills and coordination, and experience injuries and soreness. The physical becomes conscious when a girl runs, jumps, shoots and stretches. As a girl grows physically stronger and sees their body accomplishing athletically, they often become more confident and aware about their body. The goal of body image development through sport should be to teach girls how to value the body they have, take care of and control it, and use it to their benefit.

For a girl with disabilities, addressing body image in sport programmes is especially important. A girl with disabilities carries the double burden of being a woman and physically different from their peers.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- [Who Am I?](#)
- [Skills and Qualities](#)
- [Body Image](#)
- [Real Beauty Commercial](#)



Leadership

What is leadership?

Leadership encompasses the ability to lead, influence, or guide a group of people.

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

In many places, girls rarely or never get the opportunity to lead. When they are never provided with this opportunity, it is difficult for them to understand that their opinion and perspective matters and is important and valid.

How can sport strengthen leadership skills?

One of the most powerful ways for girls to develop leadership skills is for them to experience leadership roles. When they are expected to lead others, they often find power and abilities within themselves they might not know existed. Sport provides multiple opportunities for girls to become leaders. Something as simple as leading a warm-up session can help girls develop their confidence, voice, and self-awareness.

Additionally, sport provides a unique opportunity for girls to see women in leadership roles such as trainer, coach, referee or organisation leader. The more girls are exposed to other women in leadership positions, the more they will be able to envision themselves in these positions.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- Who is a Leader?

Negotiation

What is negotiation?

Negotiation is the ability to take part in a negotiation process by respecting others while being assertive, being cooperative, using communication skills, showing leadership skills and saying no when one's well-being is threatened.⁹

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

The better girls are able to communicate, negotiate and understand how to refuse advances, the more likely they are to avoid dangerous peer pressure that may result in lying, stealing, crossing emotional and physical boundaries, abuse, and unsafe sexual experiences.

How can sport strengthen negotiation skills?

Practising using their voice to communicate and negotiate in loud and forceful ways during a sport practice can help girls gain the confidence to use that voice off the field.

⁹ Life Skills and Citizenship Education Initiative Middle East and North Africa, LSCE

For example, a girl who builds confidence on the field might be more likely to speak up in her best interest, or say no when approached for sex or pressured to do drugs. Learning to negotiate playing time on the field, position choice or rules of the game can help girls learn to negotiate and communicate their rights off the field such as at school, home or in a relationship. Communication, negotiation and refusal skills are also critical in protecting girls from various forms of gender-based violence (see International Guide to Addressing Gender-Based Violence Through Sport) and in asserting their sexual and reproductive rights (see addressing SRHR Guide).

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- Learning to Say No (and

[meaning it!](#))

- [Say it with Silence](#)

- [Peer Pressure](#)

Conflict Management

What is conflict management?

Conflict management is the practice of being able to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently.

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

Every relationship experiences conflict. The better adolescent girls are equipped with the right communication tools and support networks, the more likely they are to experience healthier relationships with caregivers, family members, friends or partners. Healthy conflict management skills can also prevent adolescent girls from experiencing any form of violence, whether physical, emotional, sexual or economic.

How can sport strengthen conflict management skills?

In every sports situation, conflict is bound to occur. This can include disagreements on ways of organising during a match or on foul calls from the referee. Although conflict often gets perceived as only having negative outcomes, it can actually lead to stronger, more enduring relationships. The more girls practise healthy conflict management skills on the field, the easier it will be to apply these skills to other areas of their life.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- [Conflict Ladder](#)

- [Managing Conflict](#)

Empathy

What is empathy?

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of someone else. To develop this skill, one must be willing to consider and acknowledge the context and experience of others.

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

The ability to demonstrate empathy is important for girls, particularly when they are navigating the challenging years of adolescence. Being able to empathise with those from different contexts or experiences can lead to the acceptance of differences. This, in turn, can lead to a sense of belonging and the development of positive relationships, which are particularly important for adolescent girls.

How can sport strengthen empathy?

Sport programmes are excellent places to develop empathy, particularly team sports. Teams are often composed of people from many different backgrounds, contexts and experiences. By providing a safe environment to explore, understand and celebrate these differences, sport offers a unique opportunity to develop empathy.

Emotional Literacy

What is emotional literacy?

Emotional literacy is the ability to understand and express one's behaviours, emotions and feelings. This skill is important for understanding oneself and interacting constructively with others.

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

Adolescence can be a very confusing and emotional time for girls, particularly because they are going through significant changes. It is important for girls to be able to understand what is happening to them not only physically, but emotionally as well, and learn how to express those feelings, emotions, fears and confusions in healthy and positive ways. Too often, girls feel like they are going through these changes alone and do not reach out and ask for help, explanations or support.

How can sport strengthen emotional literacy?

Girls can find safe spaces (both physically and emotionally) in a sport programme where they can discuss and talk about what they are feeling as they experience adolescence with others who are going through similar experiences. Additionally, role models such as coaches and facilitators are in a great position to become confidants and guide girls through this confusing period in their lives. Through sport, girls learn how to share their feelings, trust others and feel part of a group, all factors that will make it easier for them to discuss and express what is going on inside their heads.

Stress Management

What is stress management?

Stress management is the ability to address feelings of tension, anxiety, or pressure and deal with them in positive ways.

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

Many situations can cause stress for adolescent girls, who face the normal stressors of adolescence in addition to stress related to gendered expectations of their role in society. These include schoolwork and exams, family conflict, relationships with friends, decisions about whether to have sexual intercourse, or future plans for careers.

Recurrent stress can result in lower levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, and lead to vicious cycles of self-doubt and self-blame. By developing stress management skills, adolescent girls can deal with stress in healthy, positive ways that make them more resilient to future stressors.

How can sport strengthen stress management skills?

Sport and other forms of physical activity can help lower overall stress levels and improve physical and mental health. Building relationships between team members and coaches also helps girls create support networks they can turn to when they are stressed or anxious.

Playing sports can also create stressful moments and provide girls with opportunities to deal with this stress by practising stress management skills (like breathing exercises, positive self-talk, or visualising success). Practising these techniques in high-stress situations on the playing field can help reinforce these skills for when girls face stressful everyday events.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- Being Mindful



Resilience

What is resilience?

Resilience is maintaining effort and interest despite failure and adversity.

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

A skill like resilience is likely to help a girl succeed on her sport team, at school or in her job despite the many societal obstacles that prevent adolescent girls from reaching their full potential. This skill is especially important when girls must cope with traumatic events that happen early on in their lives, causing harmful emotional damage, a decrease in self-esteem and even depression. Traumatic events could include being pulled out of school by family, barred from participation in sport or other leisure activities, forced labour at a young age, or any form of gender-based violence.

How can sport strengthen resilience?

Through sport, girls learn to manage stress when playing matches and games or trying out for and learning new positions. Importantly, sport can teach girls not only how to win and celebrate, but also how to lose and try again, emphasising resilience in the face of obstacles and failure.

Examples

Girls Against Aggression:

- I am Resilient
- Resilience

Teamwork and Cooperation

What are teamwork and cooperation?

Teamwork and cooperation are important skills to develop that are transferable to multiple life scenarios. Being a good team player means that you not only celebrate individual strengths and differences but collaborate as a group of unique individuals to achieve a common goal. Teamwork and cooperation can also teach other important skills such as effective communication and listening.

Why are they important for adolescent girls?

Often, girls are not celebrated for their unique strengths and skills, which can make it harder to see their personal value. When they learn to collaborate with others, they experience an environment where their skills and qualities are valued. This can lead to increased self-esteem and willingness to work with those around them in school, at home, on the field, or in a job.

How can sport strengthen teamwork and cooperation?

Playing on a sports team with a supportive coach and teammates who help develop a personal sense of value illustrates the positive aspects of teamwork and shows how when players cooperate and pool their skills and talents, they can win games or reach objectives they could not have individually. Being a team player and cooperating on the field can help girls work in groups at school, contribute to different areas of family life, or be group leaders in their jobs.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- Ground Rules
- Power With

Problem-Solving

What is problem-solving?

Problem solving is the ability to think through steps that lead to a desired goal by identifying and understanding a problem and devising a solution to address it. Problem-solving begins with recognising that a problematic situation exists and establishing an understanding of the nature of the situation. It requires the solver to identify the specific problem(s) to be solved, plan and carry out a solution(s), and monitor and evaluate progress throughout the activity.

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

With threats such as gender-based violence, abusive relationships and cultural stereotypes that strip girls of their sexual and reproductive health, education, work and leisure rights, it is important for girls to learn how to solve problems and take ownership of their lives. An important aspect of problem-solving is understanding that sometimes a problem cannot be solved alone. Therefore, it is essential for girls to be aware of and able to access external resources that can provide support if they are experiencing abuse, or if they have specific questions or concerns related to menstruating or sexual and reproductive health. When girls know how to access these services and aren't afraid to do so, they greatly reduce emotional and physical health risks and gain valuable care, information, and support.

How can sport strengthen problem-solving skills?

Sports can provide a place to practise problem-solving skills. By introducing challenges in play, for instance introducing several balls to the game or adapting the rules to make it harder to win, girls get to practise thinking about solutions. Trusted coaches or woman facilitators are ideal for introducing girls to community resources and services. They can take the girls on visits to various service providers and introduce them, in non-threatening and comfortable ways, to contacts at the institutions who can help the girls get the treatment or help they need. This initial introduction through a sport programme field trip can make girls more comfortable and less afraid to access these services outside of the programme later in life.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- [Help in My Community](#)

Critical Thinking



What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking is the ability to question and interpret information, connect ideas, and make decisions based on that information.

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

With critical thinking skills, adolescent girls can analyse the information they receive, reason with their own experience and other knowledge, and identify solutions to problems in their own lives and in their communities. These skills are especially important for understanding their surrounding environment, the role that they are expected to play within society, and the role they actually want to pursue.

How can sport strengthen critical thinking skills?

Sport programmes can be excellent environments to gain access to information and build understanding that supports critical thinking. Through the guidance of knowledgeable coaches and the support of their teammates, girls can explore through their own perspective what is important to them, be met with alternative viewpoints, and understand what strategies to use to solve problems.

Sport programmes can reach girls who are not in school, in rural areas and in communities where girls are not always able to access accurate information or given opportunities to practice critical thinking skills, particularly related to their rights and roles in society.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- Wants and Needs
- Gender in our Community

Critical Thinking and Gender-Based Violence

Critical thinking and decision-making are crucial for adolescent girls faced with the risk of gender-based violence, before, during and after the violence and abuse takes place. Knowing how to navigate the risks of gender-based violence and making decisions during or after experiencing abuse in order to lessen the impact of harmful consequences are critical skills that adolescent girls need.

As an organisation offering sport programming for girls, you can:

- Connect with local service providers, such as social welfare organisations, to help educate participants and counsel those who have been victims of gender-based violence. Be prepared to transport a girl to a service provider instead of simply making a referral.
 - Report instances of gender-based violence to the police and family, if this does not further jeopardise the girl's safety. If a family member is involved in the violence, or authorities cannot be trusted to handle the situation at hand, use alternative service providers.
- Invite someone who has experienced and overcome gender-based violence to come and share their story with the group.
- Train peer educators about responding to gender-based violence. A girl is often more willing to talk to a peer about being abused.
- Use alternative communication forms, such as poetry, music or theatre to open up sensitive discussions about gender-based violence.
- Conduct outreach events to raise awareness about gender-based violence in your region.

Goal Programme Sessions:

- History of Violence
- What is Gender-based Violence?
- Speaking up against Violence

Decision Making

What is decision making?

Decision-making is the process of choosing between two or more courses of action, and includes looking ahead to what the consequences of these actions will be.

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

Adolescent girls have to make important decisions related to school and studies, relationships, sex, and contraceptive use. Some of these decisions are easier to make and the right choice is clear. Others are more difficult and require girls to consider different perspectives and consequences of these decisions. Being able to consider the benefits and risks of different decisions before making a final choice is a vital skill for girls to make informed decisions that impact their lives.

How can sport strengthen decision making?

Playing sports can help girls practise making decisions, and oftentimes under pressure and with short time frames. For example, a leader might have to make difficult decisions about who they choose to play in a match. The more girls practise making decisions in a training environment, the more comfortable they can become with making decisions in their personal lives as well.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- Making Decisions
- Share with Care (Digital Safety)
- Contraception
- Risky Behavior



Taking Care of Your Body

What is taking care of your body?

Taking care of your body means making choices with your physical, mental, and emotional well-being in mind. This could include maintaining personal hygiene, having a regular sleep routine, hydrating, and tending to injuries.

Why is it important for adolescent girls?

Adolescence can be a tricky time, as girls are learning to deal with everything from puberty and periods to health and hygiene. Learning how to listen to your body and giving it the care it needs is an important life skill for girls to stay healthy and safe in their communities, fuel their bodies with healthy food, and maintain menstrual hygiene.

How can sport strengthen your ability to take care of your body?

Using sports can be a powerful way to teach adolescent girls about the importance of taking care of their bodies through personal hygiene and nutrition. Girls can learn that when they get enough rest and eat a healthy, balanced diet, their body stays fuelled with energy during sports practices. Sports sessions can also be a place to discuss the impact of alcohol and substance use, and the negative lasting impacts abuse of these substances can have on their bodies and minds. These lessons can have positive benefits for their lives outside of sports. Maintaining proper personal and menstrual hygiene in the context of sport - such as showering/bathing after sweating, washing your hands, wearing deodorant, and/or using menstrual sanitation products - will help girls keep clean and reduce the risk of infection and disease.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- Hygiene Tag
- Alcohol and Substance Abuse
- Puberty and Our Bodies
- 28 Days

Goal Setting and Time Management

What are goal setting and time management?

Goal Setting is the process of identifying something that you want to accomplish and establishing measurable goals and timeframes to get there. Setting goals means that a person has committed thought, emotion, and behaviours towards attaining the goal.

Why are they important for adolescent girls?

In many communities, girls are often not taught to take pride in their skills and qualities or encouraged to set and reach goals. Educating girls on setting life goals for themselves and creating a plan to reach those goals helps them realise their own value. Whether they are educational, career or family goals, objectives help girls focus and gain control of their behaviour and actions, make healthy decisions and improve their confidence and self-esteem. Girls are frequently conditioned to believe that they have a limited role to play in life: to be married off, to be someone's wife and become a tool for reproduction. By opening up the discussion about what they want for themselves, and how they could start planning to get there, they can become more intentional about their lives and their personal goals.

How can sport strengthen goal setting and time management skills?

By learning to set small goals and reach them, like juggling a football 10 times or running a kilometre without stopping, girls learn through sport that the possibilities of developing skills and reaching goals are endless. Girls start to believe that they can accomplish and achieve objectives by working hard and putting their energy into the goals they have set. Good coaches and facilitators can help girls transfer this skill off the field, by showing them that the possibilities that exist for them are numerous and not limited to what society tells them their roles should be. A girl can learn that there are similarities between working hard to run a certain distance and studying hard to pass a certain exam and continue their education.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- [My Goals](#)
- [Planning for a Future Career](#)
- [My Plan](#)



Financial Literacy

What is financial literacy?

Financial literacy is the ability to understand and effectively use various financial skills, including personal financial management, budgeting, and saving. Financial literacy is the foundation of a person's relationship with money.



Why is it important for adolescent girls?

Unfortunately, girls have few opportunities to gain financial literacy or are not encouraged to do so. Basic financial literacy is an important building block towards girls achieving economic empowerment. Before starting a business, becoming employed or just navigating personal finance, girls must know how to make a budget, develop a savings plan, and apply for a local loan.

How can sport strengthen financial literacy?

Girls sport programmes can introduce ways to practise financial literacy skills, for instance by giving them (joint) budgetary responsibility for community events or team finances.

Examples

Goal Programme Sessions:

- Understanding Money
- Saving Money
- Savings Plans
- Borrowing



03 Dealing with Barriers and Challenges

Around the world, girls and women face unique challenges to participating in sport. **These challenges are personal, practical, economic, political and cultural.** In order to create a sustainable and impactful sport programme for girls, you must **first work out what is keeping girls from participating in sport** in the first place.

Below are common barriers and obstacles to girls' participation in sport faced by Women Win partner organisations around the world, as well as suggestions for how you can design a programme that overcomes them. These barriers and obstacles often show up in different ways depending on the culture and context of your community. The most important step to understanding the obstacles girls in your region face is to go into the community and ask girls, caregivers, and community leaders their thoughts on the barriers girls face to participating in sport.



Appropriate Sport Clothing

Many communities impose constraints on what is considered appropriate attire for girls. In some conservative and religious societies, expectations include modest dress, often covering legs, arms and/or hair. According to programme partners, these requirements can make participation in many sports challenging for girls from both a practical and a psychological standpoint.

If a girl feels like they are shaming their family for wearing a swimsuit in public, they are not likely to want to swim. It can be very dangerous for a girl to shame their family by behaving in a manner that is perceived as inappropriate: they risk being punished (physically or psychologically), threatened, or having their freedom of movement restricted.

Recommendations

- Whenever possible, don't make girls choose between sport participation and adhering to cultural dress codes.
- Be flexible about what a girl can wear within the bounds of their physical safety. For example, allow girls to wear headscarves or tights if that makes them comfortable.
- Choose sport activities that girls can play in modest clothing. This can be critical for both the girls' interest in participating and the community's perception of your respect for tradition.
- When girls' attire restricts their ability to perform athletically, make accommodations. In some cultures, girls can dress as they like, as long as men are not watching. Perhaps consider conducting your sport programme in a private location that cannot be viewed by males.
- Provide girls and female coaches with proper sport attire if they can't provide it for themselves. Talk to girls and their families about their hesitations regarding athletic clothing. Major sport clothing companies have begun to produce conservative sportswear for girls and women with this issue in mind.
- When money is of concern, encourage girls and their caregivers to design and sew appropriate sports clothing, which can be worn by the girls themselves as well as sold to others. In some cases, it might be sufficient to allow girls to wear pants beneath skirts during play.



Case Study: Les Hijabeuses - The Sports Hijab

Muslim girls in certain communities around the world are fighting for their right to play sports. Some local, national, and international sporting federations and bodies prohibit the wearing of a hijab, a headscarf worn by many Muslims girls and women, while playing. Muslim athletes are put in a position of having to choose between their love for a game and their religion.

Founé Diawara was 15 years old when she was first told she could not wear her hijab in a football match. It was an important game: she had recently got into the team of a club in Meaux, the town north-east of Paris where she grew up, and they were playing a local rival. Diawara had been wearing her hijab during training, but as she was about to walk on to the pitch, the referee said she must remove it if she wanted to play. Diawara refused to take her hijab off and channelled her anger from that day into action. She became co-president of [Les Hijabeuses](#), a collective of young hijab-wearing female footballers [campaigning](#) against the FFF's ban as part of a wider battle to promote a more inclusive society in France, which has seen a rise in far-right groups and Islamophobia.

Formed in May 2020 by community organisers from the [Citizen's Alliance](#), which campaigns against social injustices in France, the Paris-based Les Hijabeuses now has more than 100 members. They play football together, connect with other teams across France and put on training sessions to encourage other young hijab-wearing women to get into football.¹⁰

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/21/les-hijabeuses-the-female-footballers-tackling-frances-on-pitch-hijab-ban/jun/21/les-hijabeuses-the-female-footballers-tackling-frances-on-pitch-hijab-ban>



Fields and Facilities

In economically disadvantaged communities, especially in urban areas, there are not enough spaces to practise sport. Adding to the issue of limited resources is the fact that the pitches and courts that do exist are often overused in high-density areas. There is typically a hierarchy for access to sports spaces, and girls' teams are often at the bottom. Programme partners report girls' football events being canceled without notice to accommodate boys and men who show up to play casual games on the pitches. In some cultures or conflict regions, it may be inappropriate or too dangerous for girls to play outside, therefore confining them to an even smaller pool of indoor spaces.

Recommendations

- Work with the local government to seek alternative pitches or courts, or find times when these spaces are not being used.
- Build partnerships with whoever makes the decisions regarding pitch/court use in a community, especially in urban areas.
- Include pitch/court space in the programme budget to ensure that the girls have the space they need to play comfortably.
- Create or build mobile equipment that you can take with you when finished playing.
- Partner with local schools and ask to use pitches on days when school is not in session (e.g. weekends or during school holidays).



Case Study: love.fútbol

[love.fútbol](https://www.lovefutbol.org/) partners with and mobilises vulnerable communities worldwide to create, reclaim, and redefine sports spaces as inclusive centres of community and lasting platforms for social growth.

love.fútbol specialises in partnering with underserved communities to plan, build, activate, and sustain their own recreational spaces, and as a result, strengthen their communities. Rather than an end product, their projects are a process where in-depth community engagement and a critical focus on sustainability are interdependent and integral to the entire project.¹¹

¹¹ <https://www.lovefutbol.org/>



Economic Constraint

Girls from economically disadvantaged backgrounds can find the costs associated with equipment, transportation and competition unrealistic for their families. Additionally, playing sports can mean time away from paid jobs and work that generates income for a family. Parents can be resistant to letting their daughter stop an activity that brings the family money in favour of something that many cultures see as a waste of time or unproductive.

Recommendations

- Consider the financial burden on both the individual and group when designing a programme for girls. If you want girls from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to be included, you must make it affordable for them to participate.
- When possible, provide income-earning opportunities for girls. Train them to provide services within the organisation that you would otherwise have to pay for externally, such as coaching and officiating.
- Be creative about improvising and finding low-cost solutions for running your programme. For example, instead of buying new uniforms, see if you can get donations of used equipment.
- Choose a sport that matches the economic capacity of your participants or cut costs by having girls share equipment. Consider creating a “shoe library” where girls check out shoes before practice and then check them back in after practice.
- Think about partnerships that can be built within the community to reduce costs. Ask for support from local businesses in exchange for marketing at events with banners or fliers displaying the business’s name.
- Create income-generating activities at your organisation that can help offset costs for participating in a tournament or attending sport camps.



Case Study: Vijana Amani Pamoja - Employability and Entrepreneurship Program

[Vijana Amani Pamoja](#) uses the power of football for the social and economic empowerment of young people in Nairobi. In addition to their sport and life skills programmes, they provide opportunities for participants to access training opportunities, which can serve as an incentive for families to encourage and allow their daughters to play in the first place.

VAP’s employability and entrepreneurship program is an exit initiative that integrates graduates of VAP’s programmes into vocational training opportunities courses and apprenticeships are linked into job opportunities, internships and entrepreneurship support.

The vocational training courses are aimed at engaging and motivating VAP’s programme graduations, providing them with valuable professional skills including: catering, hair and beauty, baking, financial and computer literacy. Courses prepare them for the job-market as well as helping them create their own sustainable income generating opportunities. VAP works closely with well-established salons and restaurants for the purposes of providing internships and job placements for the graduates.



Scheduling

Girls, especially those living in poverty, are often responsible for assisting with domestic responsibilities, including looking after children, doing chores, cooking, and cleaning. In addition, many adolescent girls fill the rest of their day in school or working paid jobs. Participation in a sport programme might not fit easily into a girl's already full schedule. Girls are often afforded only a little, if any, leisure time after their daily chores and caretaking responsibilities are over.

Recommendations

- When possible, schedule training sessions and events around the majority of a girl's home responsibilities. Consider this both on a weekly and seasonal basis. For example, in agricultural communities, harvest and planting seasons might require you to negotiate scheduling differently than growing or dormant seasons. In religious communities, it will be important to make accommodations for holidays and regular worship.
- If it is not possible to work around a girl's external commitments, be flexible in your understanding of the importance of this part of a girl's life. Consider allowing her to bring a younger sibling to a session or making up for a lesson or workout in her own time.
- In some cases, it might be helpful to organise sport programmes close to water fountains or firewood supply. This allows girls to participate in sport activities and return home with a filled water jug or a load of firewood, which is considered a productive contribution to the household.
- Ask teachers to leave you an hour before school ends to run your sport programme, thereby not taking up the girls' time dedicated to other responsibilities.



Personal Safety

There are few girls who have never feared for their own safety. Across the globe, in urban and rural environments, girls walk home from school with the risk of being robbed, harassed, or assaulted. To participate in a sport programme, girls and their caregivers have to feel safe when travelling to and from trainings and events, and throughout the entire practice and competition. In conflict zones, it is sometimes dangerous for women to simply be outside. It is important for sport programmes to first identify what threats exist to a girl's safety and then devise strategies for protecting girls from those threats.

Recommendations

- Engage female coaches and trainers who can create safe spaces. This can help the girls feel emotionally and physically secure and comfortable within their sport environment. (For more information on creating safe spaces, see the Creating Safe Spaces section of the guide).
- Include girls in the creation and implementation of safeguarding policies within the organisation. Girls who know what their rights to safety are can better demand those rights when they are lacking. (For more information on child protection policies, see Child Protection in the Safe Spaces section of the guide).
- Schedule programme activities at appropriate times of the day (determined by the community, but certainly before dusk).
- Teach girls to recognise potentially dangerous situations or areas in their community.
- Arrange suitable transportation for getting girls to and from programme sites.
- Organise groups to walk home together in order to reduce vulnerability.
- Invite a qualified instructor, preferably a woman, to teach girls basic self-defence skills.
- To avoid fear and suspicion from caregivers, inform them about the time the girls will be home and plan a safe way of getting them there.
- Develop a strategy for communicating with caregivers in case an external emergency arises during a practice or game (i.e., natural disaster or political unrest).
- Consider the choice of the sport facility. It may be necessary for your programme to hold training sessions and events indoors because it may be culturally inappropriate or dangerous for girls to play outside.
- Consider how to grow with girls' safety in mind. For example, as programmes evolve, it is likely that more girls will travel beyond the confines of their community or village to participate in sport or related activities. Their safety must be ensured throughout these changes.





Case Study: Free to Run

[Free to Run](#), a non-profit organisation that supports girls and women in areas of conflict through adventure sports to build their physical, emotional, and social well-being, ensures physical and emotional safety in their programmes by:

- Changing training locations/days in the week to never establish a traceable pattern.
- Focusing on community outreach events and volunteer activities to maintain a positive perception of the programmes in the communities where participants run and train.
- Following a comprehensive Participant Confidentiality Policy.
- Registering with security organisations to receive the latest updates/advice on movements and locations of conflict.



Female Role Models

If a girl has never seen women participating in sport, it will be virtually impossible for her to imagine playing herself. When a girl sees a woman who grew up in her region, and who has faced the same challenges she faces, speaking out for herself and walking and playing proudly, that girl's sense of what she can do expands exponentially. When a girl sees a woman who is married or has children still playing sports, she realises that becoming a wife or mother doesn't mean giving up her passions. Strong woman coaches who show just as much understanding and command of a sport as male coaches challenge a common stereotype, often held by girls themselves, that male coaches have more expertise than women.

Girls need role models not only to show them their limitless potential in sport and life, but also to show them how one can achieve success in different ways. Too often, girls only see certain types of role models, limiting their visions for their own potential.



Recommendations

- Regularly expose the girls in your programme to positive, strong women role models. Invite successful women, athletes, and community members to be guest speakers or do training sessions with your group.
- Encourage girls to be positive role models for one another by sharing their successes outside of sport during group discussions.
- Try making it a policy in your programme to promote woman coaches and leaders, even if it means you won't be the team that always wins. By doing this, you are creating an atmosphere of leadership development that sets an example and provides role models from within your organisation.
- Use powerful images of strong female role models (in and outside of sport) that can help girls visualise who a role model might be. Examples could be to put up posters around your office or in changing rooms where girls frequently go. Coaches or facilitators could also start sessions showing pictures of powerful females and hold a quick discussion about who they are and what they might represent to the group.



Government Support

Sport is a government-sponsored and regulated institution at local, provincial and national levels in many countries. In some places, sport exists almost solely within the context of the government. These governments, often run by a male majority, prioritise sporting opportunities for boys rather than girls. This bias occurs at all levels of government: national, regional and local. In countries where governments do not support sport opportunities for girls, independently run sport programmes fill an important void.

Recommendations

- Solicit the help of individuals and organisations that can influence policy decisions in order to get government support for your programme. Building an alliance or coalition of like-minded organisations that speak with one voice shows strength and could have more influence than individual organisations with their own messages.
- Find community members, including teachers and caregivers, who support your programme.
- Build a network of citizens, politicians, and business people who will lobby on your behalf. Consider including influential women in positions of power in this network, as well as popular athletes who are both men and women.
- Identify and apply for government funding that is relevant to your programme objectives.

For more information on how to engage the government in your sport programme, go to the [Community Engagement](#) section of this guide.



Case Study: Magic Bus

[Magic Bus](#), a sport for development organisation in India, has been extremely successful in expanding its programmes by applying for and receiving funding from the government to work in various states across India. By becoming the Knowledge and Implementing partner of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Government of India, Magic Bus received the support it needed to go after its goal of reaching 1 million youth in 10 Indian states.

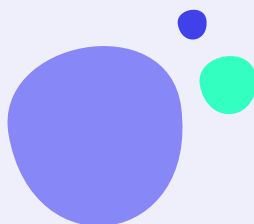


Media Coverage

The media plays a pivotal role in showing, or hiding, the images of strong, healthy female athletes who can serve as role models for younger girls. Girls derive their sense of self, in part, by what they see on the television and in newspapers and magazines. Most mainstream media show women's sport only occasionally or not at all, while providing a daily dose of men's sport. It's no wonder girls are often brought up feeling like strangers to sport. For more information on how to engage media bodies, go to the [Community Engagement](#) section of this guide.

Recommendations

- Search video collections, newspapers, books and the internet to find news about girls' and women's sport and share it with the girls in your programme.
- Encourage local media outlets to cover women's sport. Write letters, send emails and make phone calls to radio stations and newspaper editors.
- If possible, invite local media to cover your programme, events and participants.
- Take your team to watch local women's sport events if they exist, even if they are not part of a formal league.





Case Study: She Is

[She Is](#) is a collective of individuals, sport sector leaders and national sport leagues working together to grow women's sport globally. Through partnerships and advocacy efforts, they aim to achieve the following goals:

- Drive attendance and viewership of women's sports events
- Inspire fans to take action through storytelling
- Centralise resources to contribute to the sustainable growth of women's sports

Two of their initiatives focus on representation of female athletes in the media. **Women Worth Watching** is a digital space (#womenworthwatching) that highlights female athletes around the world and across a multitude of sports. Through panel discussions, videos, documentaries and social media campaigns, She Is invites everyone to share and promote stories of female athletes on their social media channels. The other initiative, **STEM in the Stadium**, highlights female athletes in STEM careers, or who are using STEM to be successful in their sport.



Religion

Sometimes religion is used by conservative societies and institutions to prevent females from participating in sport. Religious groups within society selectively appropriate religious texts to demonstrate sport as inappropriate for girls. This often shames families whose daughters play or scares families into barring their daughters from playing out of fear of religious authorities. The reality is that although many religious traditions do dictate appropriate clothing for sport or appropriate spaces, very few, if any, bar girls from playing and participating in sport. In fact, many religions promote sport as a tool for well-being. For more information on how to engage religious leaders, go to the [Engaging the Community](#) section of this guide.

Recommendations

- Approach the religious community in your area and present to them the benefits of sport on the mind and body, while showing them that your organisation abides by all rules regarding acceptable clothing or any other culturally or religiously relevant rules, such as separation of women and men. Making sure religious leaders are fully aware of what you are doing helps reduce fears, anxieties and misunderstanding that might exist.
- Ask religious leaders on board with your programme to help educate parents that religion does not forbid sport. Hold a community meeting in which you invite caregivers as well as these religious leaders.



Case Study: HODI

[HODI](#) (Horn of Africa Development Initiative) is a community organisation in Northern Kenya that works toward justice and development in the Horn of Africa through advocacy, education, peace building and sustainable livelihoods. One of their programmes, Sport on the Cutting Edge, uses football as a vehicle for life skill building and awareness raising around SRHR and GBV, with a focus on female genital mutilation and cutting. Girls meet up weekly to play football and participate in life skill sessions. A very important part of the programme engages local community leaders, and most importantly, local imams, around the importance of sport and uses them as champions against FGM/C within the community because of their influence.



Prejudices and Misconceptions

Many cultures consider sport to be a male domain. Societies assume that the physical and psychological qualities associated with athleticism, such as strength and competitiveness, are “masculine.” When femininity in a culture is associated with being petite or soft, girls are often reluctant to build muscle mass. When girls are condemned for being promiscuous for merely showing their skin in athletic clothing or raising their leg to kick a ball, they are hesitant to participate. These gendered prejudices and misconceptions extend to the role a girl should or should not play in society - and are imposed upon adolescent girls and, over time, adopted by them as well.

Recommendations

- Teach girls, caregivers and community members about the health, economic and social benefits of physical activity for an adolescent girl, to help change perceptions.
- Show images of female athletes or host events where programme participants are able to interact with a champion female athlete who is a positive role model.
- Invite caregivers, teachers and community members to visit the programme in action and to talk about their concerns.
- Create and implement a child protection policy and code of conduct that ensures there are guidelines detailing procedures and processes needed to keep girls emotionally and physically safe in the programme.



- Train coaches and facilitators on the protection policy and code of conduct so that those who have the most contact with the girls can work to ensure their safety at all times during the programme.
- Talk openly with girls about perceptions of women athletes and encourage them to care more about themselves and what makes them happy and less about what others think of them. Enlist the support of male athletes, professionals or tribal elders who are respected in the community. Their support can help to defuse myths and solicit support from other community members.
- Use local pride as a motivator. Point to national or regional women's teams and athletes as examples of women's sporting abilities.

There are also misunderstandings when it comes to sport and its impact on girls' sexual and reproductive health. Some fear that playing sports will cause loss of virginity. A common myth in some cultures is that the physical exertion of sport, such as running, kicking or jumping, will cause the hymen to tear. An intact hymen is erroneously seen as a physical indicator of virginity. In societies where a girl's virginity before marriage is sacred, the threat of sport causing a tear can be a very serious concern.

Recommendations: Fear of Loss of Virginity

- Inform caregivers about your intention to discuss reproduction with their daughters as part of the sport programme. Once you have the support to have an honest conversation, you can educate girls that the only way to lose your virginity is through sexual intercourse. A girl's hymen tearing is a physiological occurrence that can happen in a variety of ways, only one of them being sexual intercourse. Any pelvic trauma, such as that experienced when climbing a tree, riding a bike or participating in sport, can also cause tearing.
- Encouraging girls to own their bodies and make decisions based on their own well-being as opposed to cultural stigmas and myths is the next step in this conversation. Include caregivers and community members in the conversation, as their fears around their daughters losing their virginity can limit participation.

Girls and society often have misunderstandings about the safety of participating in sport while menstruating. In addition, the cost of sanitary pads and tampons can be prohibitive and not a financial priority for many families, especially in traditional cultures or among economically disadvantaged families. When girls begin to menstruate, they are often confined to their homes and temporarily or totally stop practising sport.

¹² Abder-Rahman, H. A. (2009). Hymen care for unmarried Muslim females: role of the forensic consultant in gynecology interventions. *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 15. Page 864

¹³ Association for Women's Rights in Development (2005). AWID interviews Shiphrah Gichaga of the Forum for African Women Educationalists Kenya Chapter (FAWEK) about the organisation's work in addressing menstruation management to ensure that girls' education is not interrupted by their menstrual periods. By Kathambi Kinoti. *Resource Net Friday File Issue 231*, June 2005

Recommendations: Menstruation Prohibiting Participation

- Teach girls how to manage menstruation while participating in sport. This could include training girls about how to use feminine hygiene products, such as sanitary pads, sponges and tampons. Encourage girls to use all products safely, including avoiding using tampons for prolonged periods of time and being exposed to risk of toxic shock syndrome.
- Consider providing feminine hygiene products for the girls if cost is an issue, or do fundraisers as a team to help offset the costs. If a girl cannot find the resources to purchase feminine hygiene products, educate them about safe alternatives, such as cloths or sponges.
- Let each girl know it is alright to play sports while menstruating, as long as they do not feel sick. Sometimes participation in sport might actually help them feel better. It is equally important for girls to know they can talk to trusted peers and coaches about cramps or other symptoms associated with menstruation without fear of judgement.
- Ask an accomplished female athlete to come and discuss this subject of playing while menstruating with participants.



Body Image

A girl's perception of their own body and their relationship with their body image can influence if they feel confident or comfortable enough to play sport. Many girls are apprehensive to join sport programmes out of fear that they will not look attractive and their bodies will become less "feminine" because of the development of muscles, and therefore they will struggle to find a boyfriend or significant other or ever get married. Also, girls are sometimes not confident enough with their own bodies to participate without feeling ashamed or embarrassed.

Recommendations

- Discuss with participants alternative ideas of beauty. Ask them what the "ideal" woman looks like in their opinion and then ask them to look around and see who in that room has all those characteristics. Point out that this "ideal woman" does not exist and that beauty is not one thing but different things to different people.
- Expose girls to strong female athletes who have gotten married and have families of their own. If these women are accessible in your community, have them talk to girls through visits to schools and youth centres.
- Be patient. Sometimes it takes girls time to develop confidence in their bodies or develop positive self-image. What they need is a positive and encouraging environment free from judgemental comments, teasing, or harassing.



Game
over!