



What Young People Are Saying About...

EDUCATION, SPORT, AND DEVELOPMENT

Your rights to education and sport according to

the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*

Article 28: Every child has a right to education.

Article 29: Education shall aim at developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent.

Article 31: The child has the right to leisure, play and participation in activities like sport, art, music or dance.

On 30 September 2003, young people from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Zambia participated in a 2-hour chat hosted by *Voices of Youth*. The main objective of the chat was to discuss how playing sports can help young people succeed in school and play an active role in their communities and in their homes.

A 2-hour preparatory chat was held on 23 September 2003 to allow participants a chance to practice the techniques of "chatting" and to suggest what issues they wanted to discuss during the 30 September chat.

Discussion topics included:

- ❖ Barriers that prevent girls from playing sport
- ❖ Stereotypes about girls and sport
- ❖ Rural versus urban attitudes toward girls playing sport
- ❖ Balancing sport, school, and work
- ❖ Positive effects of sport
- ❖ Learning about other issues (HIV) through sport
- ❖ The role of sport in building friendships and promoting peace

Chat Summary

Benefits

All of the participants agreed that playing sport has many important benefits for them, such as teaching leadership skills and cooperation, keeping them fit and healthy, providing a positive outlet in which to relieve stress, anger and frustration, and making them feel happier and more confident.



"When I feel angry and frustrated, I feel like playing football. I focus all my anger on the ball, and when I kick it, I kick the anger.

- Participant from Bangladesh



“People say that a girl will get nowhere by running or participating in a sport. Growing up my family did not support my sports activities. They thought that I should concentrate only on my class work. They did not understand that sports were an important part of my education. Last year I came in first in my age division....”

- Participants from Ethiopia

Education & awareness building

Sport also helps participants succeed in school. First of all, it can inspire children and young people to want to come to school. And it refreshes and clears the mind so they can concentrate better.

Also, sport provides an opportunity to learn about different issues, such as HIV and substance abuse, which can be discussed with the whole team. The team then becomes a support network for healthy living.

Some examples:



In Zambia, sport was used in a measles campaign to reach 5 million children nationwide—during the campaign, play centres were set up and kids who came to play were vaccinated



In Bhutan, celebrated no tobacco day through basketball and football games



In Pakistan, a famous cricket bowler went to girls schools in Islamabad to give lessons on HIV

Friendship & Peace

Participants all felt that sport plays a large role in building friendships: through sharing a common passion, meeting all sorts of new people in competitions, and bonding with teammates. By reducing racism and building bridges between people from different cultures, sport can also help to promote peace. “Teams participate in competition and they get to see the best of each other—sports can help people build peace.” (participant from Ethiopia)

Barriers: Time Management

However, participants expressed concern over the time that sport requires; many find it difficult to juggle household chores, school, and sport. Since boys generally don't have as many household chores as girls, they find it easier to manage their time.



“In Ethiopia too there is a law against early marriages, but it continues to happen. Schools are therefore very important – teachers can go out and educate the farmers – our top female athletes like Derartu Tullyu could go out and show what they have been able to accomplish and that would change things – and we must convince the boys not to participate in practices that discriminate against girls – to break the harmful traditions...”

-Participants from Ethiopia

Barriers preventing girls from participating in sports

Significant barriers still prevent girls from participating in sport to the same extent as boys. These barriers range from stereotypes, such as girls are too weak to play or that playing sport is not ladylike, to early marriages that force girls to assume household duties leaving time for little else. Participants also talked of girls being too shy to play sports, and felt this to be particularly problematic for high contact sports, like rugby.

Parents' and society's objections to girls participation was also discussed as a great barrier to girls playing sports.

Are boys encouraged?

Participants talked about how many parents and communities that discourage girls from playing sports encourage boys to include sports in their daily routines.



"In Eritrea, girls are allowed to play sports mainly in the city...because in the country side they are traditional so girls do not play sports...What we mean is that girls play but not as much as boys that is they don't have access because they are supposed to do housework."

- Participants from Eritrea

Rural versus Urban

It is particularly difficult for girls in rural areas

to play sports, because the adults in rural villages tend to have very conservative views of what is appropriate for girls. Also, girls are relied on more to do household work in villages. Participants agreed that girls in cities find it easier to play sport and that there are more opportunities to play in urban areas.



"...yes, boys are encouraged. It keeps them out of trouble while growing up...it is also a way [for them] to release excess energy. Boys are encouraged because most people feel the boys have no chores in the house."

- Participants from Nigeria

Professional athletes

When discussing whether girls have the same chance as boys to become professional athletes, they felt that in every country around the world, girls have fewer opportunities. However, they observed that professional women athletes make it easier for girls to participate, and each time one wins, you see more girls out there playing the next morning, dreaming to be like them.

Discrimination against the disabled and those living with AIDS

People with disabilities and people living with AIDS also struggle with significant barriers that prevent them from playing sport. Participants spoke of initiatives in their countries to help remove these barriers including wheelchair racing in Ethiopia, cricket world cup for the disabled and Special Olympics in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

How to break down the barriers?

The participants had many ideas for how to increase girls' participation in sport. Cultural practices that discriminate against girls (such as early marriage) should be made illegal. Boys and girls should be given equal amounts of chores, encouragement, and time to play. Campaigns should be organized that educate people about the benefits of girls playing sport. More women's sports complexes should be built, and schools should organize more girls' teams.



"There are few role models for girls...to encourage their participation...here we believe girls should be empowered...in lifeskills"

- Participants from Tanzania

Suggestions for 11 October 2003 chat

- ❖ How can sports promote equality?
- ❖ How does sports help you perform better in school?
- ❖ How can sports help you to be a good human being, mentally, spiritually, physically?
- ❖ How can you cope with both school and sports?
- ❖ How can we improve our performance in sports?
- ❖ What can be done to promote equal opportunities for boys and girls to develop and progress in life?
- ❖ Why are children in rural areas not given equal opportunities in sports as the urban children ?

- ❖ Role models and how they can help change stereotypes

Questions for Johann Koss

- ❖ Why did Johann Koss choose iceskating?
- ❖ How has sports changed Johann Koss as a person?
- ❖ What is Johann Koss doing to promote sports for girls?

HIV/AIDS awareness

During the chat, participants asked questions about HIV/AIDS transmission, both in general and specifically in terms of the risks of transmission while playing sports. For more information on transmission of HIV/AIDS, young people should direct their questions to a health care provider (such as a doctor, nurse, or a person with medical knowledge), a parent, a guardian, or a trusted adult, brother or sister.

They can also use the Internet as a resource. Here are some sites they may want to visit:

- ❖ The Right to Know: Young People and HIV/AIDS (UNICEF): <http://www.unicef.org/righttoknow/index.html>
- ❖ Fight HIV/AIDS (Voices of Youth/UNICEF): <http://www.unicef.org/voy/aids/>
- ❖ Transmission and Prevention of HIV/AIDS (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/faqs.htm#transmission>
- ❖ Staying Alive: <http://www.staying-alive.org/ph2/index.jhtml>



The 10 Basic Facts on HIV/AIDS

1. AIDS is caused by HIV.

AIDS is caused by HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus, which damages the body's defense system. People who have AIDS become weaker because their bodies lose the ability to fight all illnesses. They eventually die. There is no cure for HIV/AIDS.

2. The onset of AIDS can take up to ten years.

The onset of AIDS can take up to ten years from the time of infection with the HIV virus. Therefore a person infected with HIV may look and feel healthy for many years, but he or she can transmit the virus to someone else. New drug therapies can help a person stay healthier for longer periods of time, but the person will still have HIV and be able to transmit HIV.

3. HIV is transmitted through HIV-infected bodily fluids.

HIV is transmitted through the exchange of any HIV-infected bodily fluids. Transfer may occur during all stages of the infection/disease. The HIV virus is found in the following fluids: blood, semen (and pre-ejaculated fluid), vaginal secretions, breast milk.

4. HIV is most frequently transmitted sexually.

HIV is most frequently transmitted sexually. That is because fluids mix and the virus can be exchanged, especially where there are tears in vaginal or anal tissue, wounds or other sexually-transmitted infections (STIs). Girls are especially vulnerable to HIV infection because their vaginal membranes are thinner and more susceptible to infection than those of mature women.

5. People who have STIs are at greater risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS.

People who have STIs are at greater risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS and of transmitting their infection to others. People with STIs should seek prompt treatment and avoid sexual intercourse or practice safer sex (non-penetrative sex or sex using a condom), and inform their partners.

6. The risk of sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS can be reduced.

The risk of sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS can be reduced if people don't have sex, if uninfected partners have sex only with each other or if people have safer sex -- sex without penetration or using a condom. The only way to be completely sure to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV is by abstaining from all sexual contact.

7. People who inject themselves with drugs are at high risk of becoming infected with HIV/AIDS.

HIV can also be transmitted when the skin is cut or pierced using an unsterilized needle, syringe, razorblade, knife or any other tool. People who inject themselves with drugs or have sex with drug users are at high risk of becoming infected with HIV/AIDS. Moreover, drug use alters people's judgment and can lead to risky sexual behaviour, such as not using condoms.

8. Contact a health worker or an HIV/AIDS centre to receive counseling and testing.

Anyone who suspects that he or she might have been infected with HIV should contact a health worker or an HIV/AIDS centre in order to receive confidential counseling and testing. It is your right.

9. HIV is not transmitted by everyday contact.

HIV is not transmitted by: hugging, shaking hands; casual, everyday contact; using swimming pools, toilet seats; sharing bed linen, eating utensils, food; mosquito and other insect bites; coughing, sneezing.

10. Everyone deserves compassion and support.

Discriminating against people who are infected with HIV/AIDS or anyone thought to be at risk of infection violates individual human rights and endangers public health. Everyone infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS deserves compassion and support.

Some information about education and sports

Girls and education

Every child has a right to education; but more than 121 million (121.2) young girls and boys are out of school, most of whom are girls. In Africa, almost 24 million (23.9) girls are not in school. In South Asia, the number is 23.5 million. Girls face many more obstacles to getting educated than boys. A poor family, for example, will often pay school costs for the boy, rather than the girl; the girl's help may be needed at home; the family may be worried about the girls' safety at school, or about her safety getting to school.

A girl who loses out on the opportunity to go to school loses much more than an education. A girl who goes to school, and more importantly learns in school, learns about human rights, health issues, safety issues, how to read and learns the value of an education. With this knowledge, she can help her family know more about health and teach her friends who are out of school about safety issues. She can read the signs on a bus and help her mother get to where she needs to go. She can start to dream about her future and give those around her hope. It's about empowerment.

But what about boys?

Removing obstacles for girls to go to school also helps boys. For example, removing school fees makes it easier for boys to go to school. And a safer and violence-free school environment is good for everyone.

Where do sports come in?

Schools are not the only place where children can learn. Playing sport and other recreational activities can greatly improve children's lives. Sport has long been known to improve children's health—both in mind and body. Many important skills are learned through team sports, for example, leadership, conflict resolution, collaboration, understanding one's opponents, and how to win and lose with respect for others. It can provide a positive way to express anger, aggression, or frustration. In countries where children may have few opportunities to learn or to escape from fighting, disease and poverty, sport can provide a safe place to learn, play, relax, and have fun.

Sport can also provide young people with their own space, both physically and emotionally. This is especially important for girls who often have fewer opportunities than boys to do things outside the home.

In many countries, girls are discouraged from playing sports. Some places even believe that girls should not, or cannot, play sports because they are too weak or they don't think that sport is an appropriate activity for girls.

Why talk about sports and education now?

By dedicating the 2003 Women's World Cup to girls' education, FIFA (the International Football Organization) has joined UNICEF in the struggle to make sure every child—both girls and boys—can take advantage of their right to an education. The day before the final game, 11 October 2003, the world celebrates Global Girls Football Day.

The 11 October 2003 chat is one way we can also celebrate this day and talk about how sport can help young people gain the skills, confidence and experience to achieve in all walks of life.