



What Young People Are Saying about...

Education, Sport and Development on Global Girls' Football Day

On 11 October 2003, designated "Global Girls' Football Day" by UNICEF and FIFA (the international football association), young people from Bhutan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zambia participated in a 2-hour chat hosted by *Voices of Youth*. This was the second and final chat organized as part of UNICEF's girls' education campaign to discuss how playing sports can help young people succeed in school and play an active role in their communities and in their homes.

UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Johann Olav Koss, an Olympic Gold medalist speedskater from Norway and the CEO of Right to Play, was a special guest participant in the chat.

Discussion topics included:

- ✍ How sport can help you in school
- ✍ How sport can help you in your life
- ✍ Sport and poverty
- ✍ Sport and equality
- ✍ Role models
- ✍ What you can do to promote sport

Following is a brief summary of the 11 October chat. For a summary of the 30 September chat, please visit *Voices of Youth* (<http://www.unicef.org/voy/news/>) or [click here](#).

Chat Summary

How sport can help you in school

Everyone felt that sports can be a tremendous help in learning and in school. Participants spoke of how playing sport before school increases your alertness and energy and helps improve your concentration. They also talked of how sport can increase your determination to succeed, build your self-confidence and can keep you fresh and teach you discipline. Sports help relieve stress and then you can pay more attention to your classes, like the saying goes, "All work and no play make Ibrahim a dull boy."



"I think after playing, I become fresh-minded and ready to think of something new.... Sometimes sport helps me reduce my emotion, especially anger."

– Participants from Tanzania

Participants also said that sports can be the factor that motivates you to come to school in the first place. Participants from Ethiopia stated: *“Before I became active in sports I was not doing well in school – I did not understand and follow my lessons well. When I began taking athletics seriously however my grades shot up and I have been coming in first and second in my class.”*



“We are also using [sport] to bring people together to get basic messages across and also some basic arithmetic and language lessons....When we get the kids together, especially kids that don't go to school, we use the breaks to teach as well.”

- Participants from Zambia

Cooperation: Sport promotes team work, and help students interact and know each other better – and they can transfer this to the classroom and help each other learn better by participating together.

Parents: If parents understand the benefits of sports, and if sports are played in school, then parents have more reason to enrol their children.

Schools: When your school does well in sport, you experience a sense of pride and team spirit. Sport makes schools more child friendly by

incorporating games and making learning fun. By winning competitions, schools get money to improve their sports facilities. When your school participates in sports, investors will want to put more money into school facilities, raising the standard of education.

How sport has helped you in your life

Chat participants all felt that sport helped to improve their quality of life in many different ways—from bringing young people and children together to making you sweat and get rid of toxins to increasing energy and fitness. Sport teaches leadership skills, communication skills, patience and perseverance, and how to deal with many different situations. It gives you the opportunity to meet many different people, and it can motivate you to try harder and build confidence.



Nigeria: *“I did taekwondo for 3 years and it really helped in terms of understanding what people go through when they fight, so now I don't fight any more and anywhere I go I preach this message of peace.”*



“It has been three years since I started running. Before that I used to hang out with a group of kids who would drink. When I began running I didn't have time to spend with them and we drifted apart. Now they are not in good situation. I know some in our neighborhood, older than me who are now HIV positive and have AIDS. Looking back I think that I could have been like that and I thank my family and sports for keeping me safe.”

- Participants from Ethiopia



Bhutan: *“Sports can be a medium for teachers and students to understand each other better....It gives students a chance to show teachers what they are all about as persons and not just students.”*



Nigeria: *“When I ran and came first, it made me believe in myself and believe I can succeed in anything as long as I am determined.”*

Sports and poverty

During the chat, participants talked about the different ways that sports can help decrease poverty. When students participate in sports, they are more alert and do better in school—therefore, if more students are participating in sports, more will work harder and do better—thus helping to reduce poverty.

Participants also considered how sports can contribute to the overall economy, stating that sport is a really inexpensive way to create job opportunities, by producing equipment for example. Through sports we can make friends with each other’s countries and get help from each other (Bhutan). Through sports you can meet a lot of people – whether football or running – and it can lead to opportunities to make money (Ethiopia).



“I think sometimes sports are neglected in some poor countries because their governments are focusing on other issues in their country, ex. poverty, but if we can convince them that sports can contribute to eliminating the issues concerning them I think sports then will play a bigger role in the concerned countries.”

- Participants from Bhutan

Sport and equality

Participants felt that sports can help promote equality because when boys and girls play sports, they are judged according to their abilities and not according to their gender. It also teaches boys and girls the same skills, including leadership abilities.



“If boys and girls are playing together, this may help [girls] see they are not too weak to play and that they are equal.”

- Participants from Eritrea

Johann Koss: *“Remember always compare yourself with yourself. If you have improved yourself – you have to be happy – because you have never done better. Don’t always value yourself from what others are doing.”*

What can be done to help promote sports: Role Models

All the participants agreed that role models, because of their popularity and the respect people have for them, can play an important role in educating families, communities, and governments about the importance of sport and its benefits for all children. *“We are all role models because there is always someone who looks up to us—even sometimes our younger brothers and sisters!”* (Johann Koss)



“I mean look at Johann...just by chatting with us, we have been encouraged to do something.”

- Participants from Bhutan

Here are some examples of how role models have used their fame to accomplish something good:



Zambia: Besides Kalusha football), Ellen Hight (swimmer), Samuel Matete (athlete), Lango Sinkamba (para Olympics) were involved in the measles campaign...it reached 5 million children across the country.



Ethiopia: Haile G. has a computer school and he is teaching skills to people who can use them to get jobs and this helps reduce poverty. Derartu Tullu also has schools, same with Berhan Adere and Gezah.



“Some parents don’t see how this helps their kids do better in school, we have gone out to talk about the benefits of sport and hold more sports activities, we’re getting a good response but not everywhere.”

- Participants from Zambia

What is being done to help promote sports in our countries

Young people spoke of what is being done in their own countries to promote the value of sport.

Bhutan: *“With this Global Girls’ Football Day, we are launching 65 sports-in-a-box kits to remote schools in the rural areas and asking them to promote football for girls. We are also having a woman’s league to promote girls’ football in November.”*

Tanzania: *“We have established a sports centre, and youth and children come to play every evening.”*

Nigeria: *“Organizing the All Africa Games right now.”*

What we do in the future to promote sports

- ✍ Campaign for more girls to be involved in sport in schools, communities, and clubs.
- ✍ Form a lobby group and visit lawmakers.
- ✍ Ask role models and other important figures in your country to help promote sports.
- ✍ Girls should participate in sports, even if there are a lot of boys, to be an example for other girls.

Q&A with Johann Koss

One of the most exciting aspects of the chat was the opportunity to ask questions and learn what Johann Koss, Norwegian speedskater and UNICEF goodwill ambassador thinks about education, sports and development. Here are a few of the questions asked and Johann's answers.

Bhutan: Why do some girls think that all sports are not meant for them?

Johann: I think all sports are for women...but sometimes they think it is not for them. Many years ago they thought that women could not run more than 2000 meters! Now they know that they are excellent marathon runners. And they are getting faster and faster and they say they will beat the men if it is even longer!

Nigeria: Are there a lot of girls in your sport?

Johann: There are a lot of girls in my sport from all countries and we need to have more....It is great when we can see girls winning a medal for our countries.

Eritrea: Some sports are impossible for girls to play?

Johann: First no sport is impossible for girls!...There are boxers and wrestlers in the Olympics for girls! It is not more dangerous for girls than boys and actually there are less injuries for girls in these sports!

Ethiopia: When you stop competing as you get older, will you become a coach and train young people?

Johann: I have already stopped and now I am working for Right to Play (www.righttoplay.com) that gives sport and play to children in developing and war-torn countries. I will not be a coach for a while, but I'm also a medical doctor.

Bhutan: Can you tell us something about diseases which can be helped by playing sports?

Johann: I think that sport can help for prevention of noncommunicable diseases as it prevents heart attacks, cancer, diabetes 2, and like that. It also prevents depression and post-traumatic feelings.

Nigeria: How can we encourage disabled and those living with HIV/AIDS to play sport?

Johann: We have to give them possibilities to play – give them space, coaching and equipment. They should be integrated.

Eritrea: Why do some people think sports are a waste of time?

Johann: Because it seems to be a luxury. It is not. As we know it is a right and a primary need!

Nigeria: Do you think drugs are necessary for athletes?

Johann: DRUGS are NOT necessary for athletes – I know and have seen many athletes that have won the gold in the Olympics without doping. I am absolutely opposed to the use of drugs in sport!

Tanzania: Who encouraged you (role model) to be in sport activities?

Johann: I have Eric Haiden as a role model in speed skating – he got gold medals and was a doctor too.