

Women and Girls

Activity Box 1.3

Module 1: Target Group



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Key Facts

- Girls who participate in sporting activities at school have a 76% higher chance of remaining interested in Sport for the rest of their lives (26)
- Women (especially in menopause) are more likely than men to get osteoporosis. Sport and physical activity can act effectively in the prevention of this disease
- As little as four hours of exercise a week may reduce a teenage girl's risk of breast cancer by up to 60%

Specific groups this Activity Box applies to:

- Girls, in particular from 8 to 17 years old
- Women of all ages

Why is it so important

Contribution

Sport can offer economic, emotional and physical self-determination benefits to women and girls as a response to the triple challenge of gender discrimination, age and poverty:

- Prevention of unintended pregnancy and child marriage
- Acquisition of life skills: girls are more likely to get better grades in school and more likely to graduate than others who do not play Sport.
- In senior ages, it provides critical skills for success in the workplace or at home.
- Effects on mental well-being: Confidence, self-esteem, more positive body image and lower levels of depression.
- Prevent risk factors such as osteoporosis and breast cancer.

International endorsement

UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport

'Equal opportunity to participate and be involved in all decision-making levels in physical education, physical activity and Sport (recreation, health promotion or high performance), is the right of every girl and every woman that must be actively enforced'.

Barriers to Sport that should be overcome

- Reduced support for females and male dominance in most Sport: Lack of female role models and coaches
- Early pregnancy and/or child marriage

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- Sexual harassment, other forms of abuse and gender-based violence in Sport environment
- There are scarce options of PE and Sport choices adapted to women and girls
- Gender-based stereotypes and other forms of discrimination
- Poverty, heavy domestic demands, in cases of women that sustain households
- Body image perceptions and sense of shame due to their body development, incl. menstruation
- Culture and religion
- Excessive competitiveness and non-inclusive Sport activities: Many adolescents drop out at certain ages for the simple fact that Sport stop being fun
- Access fees, equipment and transportation costs
- Culture and religion

Tips and key success factors

Safety:

- Develop tools and guidelines to prevent and respond to harassment and abuse, e.g., gender inclusion policy.
- Make sure that the way/the transportation to the Sport facility and back home is safe, especially but not only when activities are offered in the evenings.
- Reports of harassment should always be taken seriously.

Clothing and facilities

- Sense of shame: be aware that young women and women have a safe place to change, separate from boys and men. Some girls might not feel comfortable wearing Sport clothing to play Sport.
- Once girls reach puberty, undergarments become imperative for Sport participation. A supportive Sport bra and adequate underwear should be recommended.

Recognise and reward:

- Publicly honour girls based on leadership, performance and initiative. Recognition can be a physical award such as a certificate or trophy, a privilege or simply verbal recognition in front of the group by a coach or leader.
- It is equally important to communicate regularly and transparently with caregivers about a girl's activities and progress to avoid misjudgements and help caregivers see the positive benefits of Sport participation.

Stress the importance of Sport participation:

Girls and women need to consciously see the value of a programme before making a commitment. Some motives are:

- Learning new skills, building physical strength, or feeling a heightened sense of possibility.
- Companionship with other girls or women is significant to develop the ability to socialise.

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Competition

- Provide opportunities to succeed as early as possible
- Mixed-gender sessions: boys and girls can compete against each other. Boys have to understand it does not matter if they lose against a boy or girl. And girls want to be treated the same way as boys

Other tips

- Keep it fresh and make it fun as many females targeted by Sport programmes live serious lives, having experienced serious trauma or carrying over duties and responsibilities. Games, and music are always a must.
- Give girls leadership roles that encourage goals setting and work hard to reach them.
- Consider looking after spaces for children. Remember that many women are carrying over duties such as motherhood or taking care of younger siblings.
- Female-only sessions: Builds confidence, friendship; breaks down fears and hesitation, especially initially. Later on, mixed session as they might be less scared and they know the people are nice.
- Engaging female coaches and role models to keep women committed: This can be inspirational in terms of personal skills enhancement.
- Do not assume that females have the same behaviours as males.
- Challenge assumptions that females are the weak sex/underestimating females' abilities.
- Never normalize any form of objectivation or embodiment messages neither in formal channels such as social media nor in informal ones.
- Focus on body appearance should be avoided. Instead, activities should recognize and strengthen body functionality.

Available Resources

- [One Win Leads to Another \(OWLA\)](#), a joint partnership between UN Women and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that is a legacy of the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro [Click Here](#)
- Made to Play Coaching Girls Guide (Nike Inc.) [Click Here](#)

Sample Case

Empowering Girls and Young Women through Sport and Physical Activity (GIZ)

- Complete workshop with resources to promote and sensitize around the creation of opportunities for women and girls
- Football based and other resources
- Focus on emergency contexts

More information:

Case study and toolkit. [Click Here](#)

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