



GIRLS ONLY SPACES

1 ABOUT GIRLS & FOOTBALL SA

HIV/Aids, teen pregnancy and violence against girls and women are highly prevalent in South Africa. Inspired by this fact and the need to provide girls with a positive platform to develop, we use football as a vehicle for education and a source of empowerment for girls, equipping them with a strong sense of body ownership and promoting self-esteem.

At the award winning Girls & Football SA¹, we involve the local and global community by encouraging sport as a developmental tool for girls and by raising awareness about important issues that influence the lives of girls in South Africa.

We conduct workshops combining life skills training and football to empower girls at a grass roots level. Through production of our award winning documentary, "Can I Kick It?", various Girls & Football SA media channels social networks, and leading websites such as Supersport and Women Talk Sports, we raise awareness nationally and internationally on women's sports in South Africa. By linking our participants with strong role models such as the players of the South African national women's team, they are inspired to build a better future. Through design of our educational health campaign, we provide girls with important health information they need.

¹ Girls & Football SA is a winner in the first annual Girl Effect Challenge through the Nke Foundation. We received a "Best Research" award from the Interdisciplinary Centre of Excellence for Sports Science and Development for our academic research on girls' sport. The Sports and Business plan which reflects Girls & Football SA's development strategy was awarded by Nike, Ashoka Changemakers and the National Committee for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development. Our documentary, "Can I Kick It?" won "Best Documentary" at the Festival du TV et Cinema in Beirut, Lebanon, the second biggest film festival in the Middle East. Our founder has been recognized through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Women Deliver 2013 as a 100 Young Leader.



2 WHY GIRLS

Girls face immense inequalities in South Africa, even in spaces meant for positive development, like schools. Frequently, girls are sexually harassed/abused and don't receive proper assistance to deal with traumatizing experiences. By equipping our female players with tools to build a strong self-esteem they are encouraged to believe in and understand their rights.

Objective: To empower girls through sport, media and education in order to better equip them with the life skills they need to make educated choices.

Target Group: Girls aged 10-14 & 15-19 (workshop participants) and young women aged 20-29 (coaches and life skills trainers).

Girls face different challenges to boys, in addition to institutionalized stigma preventing them from participating in sport. Placing an emphasis on being sensitive towards a girl's

needs as she is growing up and participating in sport allows her to feel safe and trusted - two key factors contributing to her further physical and mental development.

Execution: We have trained² 20 volunteers working in two communities in the Western Cape. During two-hour workshops once weekly in two locations with 80 girls, the girls conduct football drills and life skills based education and training. By hosting our workshops at tournaments we have reached 3,000 girls in 3 years. We have experience under our belt and with strategic partners want to make the Girls & Football SA a national movement.

² Our training materials are derived from works completed by Women Win, Women Thrive Worldwide, Sport in Society and Girls Action Foundation.

3 WHY SPORT

Method: We have successfully combined sport, media and education to develop a comprehensive and unique program specific to girls' development, the only organization in South Africa to do so. At Girls & Football SA, our participants have access to a "safe place" to practice sport which maximizes growth potential and development. Our volunteers receive in depth training prior to working with the participants and we stress a girls-only space.

In South Africa, only 8% of media sport coverage is allocated towards features regarding female athletes and female sport development. This blatant lack of coverage on girls' and women's success in sport negates the important contribution women are making to the field, in turn neglecting the importance of strong women in leadership positions.

Football is the continent's most popular sport, which is why we've chosen it as a vehicle to equip girls with skills so readily granted to boys; leadership, being a team player, responsibility, and commitment.

QUICK TIP

A girl between the ages 10 - 14 is at a crossroad between childhood and adulthood. The changes her body is going through might make her feel vulnerable and uncomfortable, and as she enters puberty she may become more susceptible to being sexually targeted by others. At Girls & Football SA there is the potential to make a positive contribution during this part of a girl's life, by providing her with a safe space to grow, develop and talk about the challenges she is facing.



4 OUR COMMUNITIES

Between August 2010 and December 2013, our volunteers, interns and staff worked with 80 girls in two communities in the Western Cape, and reached a total of 3,000 girls in total. Below, you can read a bit more about two of our sample communities to become familiar with the areas in which we work.

1st Community: Kayamandi (29,000 inhabitants) is located in the outskirts of Cape Town. The township has 2 primary schools, but requires an additional 6 to provide education for all the children. Police reports indicate girls are harassed at school by boys and teachers yet little is done to counter and prevent these violations. Since implementation, the participants, teachers and principals have been exceedingly receptive and satisfied with the program. Recommendations include more workshops, which is a priority during our expansion.

Lynedoch is located 30km outside of Cape Town. Lynedoch Primary School accommodates 475 children from farm worker families. The schools' principal is an athlete and agreed that Lynedoch is a perfect community for football development programs for girls, as these had never been implemented before. The positive reception of the program is immense; although our resources limit us to working with small groups of girls, we are consistently greeted by a very large amount of keen players.

Both communities are challenging environments for a child to grow up in. The particular challenges facing a girl child are sexual harassment/assault, gender specific roles assigned from an early age, stigma when partaking in sport programming, and obligatory domestic duties deterring girls from being able to participate. In Lynedoch particularly, alcohol abuse is not uncommon, which often times requires children to be mature beyond their years, though this is often not age appropriate.

Research shows parents do not always conduct themselves in sexually appropriate ways, with as a result that children imitate sexually inappropriate behavior at a young age. Emphasizing healthy sexuality and a healthy life style is crucial to the development of children.

A PRIORITY DURING OUR WORKSHOPS

IS TO ENSURE THE GIRLS PLAY IN A SAFE AND COMFORTABLE GIRLS-ONLY SETTING, WHICH CATERS TOWARDS THEIR BASIC NEEDS (THROUGH PROVIDING WATER AND SNACKS), THEIR SAFETY, THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS, THEIR ESTEEM NEEDS, AND EVENTUALLY, THEIR SELF-ACTUALIZATION.



5 EXPANSION

Girls & Football SA consistently tries to branch out into more areas, in order to be able to run more workshops. Several schools and communities have approached Girls & Football SA for implementation of the workshops. However, lack of resources and funding pose a challenge in carrying out these goals. An important goal remains securing funds and support.

6 WORKSHOP DESIGN

The program is structured for two-hour workshops to operate on a weekly basis, commencing in a classroom setting and ending on the football field. During the first 4 sessions in a series of 6 to 8 workshops per semester, the volunteers re-iterate 'rules' of the program, with an emphasis placed on the workshops being a 'safe space'. This concept is uncommon, but vital to the participants' understanding they can be themselves, shouldn't be afraid to ask questions, and can voice concerns. Through the programming, participants engage in role playing games, life skills based education, followed by drills, activities and a football match.

Each week, a different girl forms 'her' team. We encourage girls to pick players not only based on skill, but based on other attributes such as how she acts in a team and her sportswomanship.

QUICK TIP

Through effective use of media, as we've done at Girls & Football SA, it is possible to reach a wider audience and raise awareness. One way to do so is by creating short videos that highlight the important effect sport has on the development of girls and women.

WE ENCOURAGE GIRLS

TO PICK PLAYERS NOT ONLY BASED ON SKILL, BUT BASED ON OTHER ATTRIBUTES SUCH AS HOW SHE ACTS IN A TEAM AND HER SPORTSWOMANSHIP.



7 CHALLENGES & HOW TO HANDLE THEM

This following section highlights challenges that may be faced when working in sport programs with girls, and how to deal with these challenges.

#1 CHALLENGE: PREJUDICES AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Sport is considered a male domain, with the assumption that aggression, as part of sport behavior, is inherently a male characteristic⁴. Physical and psychological qualities associated with athleticism are 'masculine', and can be met with reluctance from girls who feel they need to be soft and feminine. Girls might be thought of as wanting to challenge tradition and society by participating in sport, which might make parents and community leaders uncomfortable.

HOW TO HANDLE THIS CHALLENGE:

- Raise awareness through education: help girls, family members and caretakers understand they don't have to feel negative about what muscles do to girls' bodies
- Show girls role models they can look up to such as successful female athletes from similar backgrounds
- Include the community; parents, teachers, brothers, etc. in understanding why sport is important for girls
- Ensure a girl is physically safe - sport will not damage her body (unless an injury occurs during natural practice)
- Talk about sport and answer questions honestly
- Use local pride as a motivator; talk about the success of Banyana Banyana or Bantwana Bantwana

⁴ United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2007). Women 2000 and Beyond; Women, Gender Equality and Sport

#2 CHALLENGE: SPORT APPAREL

Allow for girls to be comfortable at all times. If they feel forced to wear something uncomfortable, they may be deterred from participating.

HOW TO HANDLE THIS CHALLENGE:

- Try not to make girls choose between playing sport, or wearing traditional dress; be accommodating and use the opportunity to engage in discussion
- Let them tell you what they feel comfortable in and don't be judgmental
- Encourage caregivers to sew clothing of their preferred outfit
- Be a role model: wear appropriate clothing to workshops

#3 CHALLENGE: MENSTRUATION AND HYGIENE

During menstruation, girls may feel excluded if they have not received information about their bodily changes. They may withhold from playing sports and may not know how to use sanitary products safely. It's possible proper hygiene skills have not been shared. Encouraging participants to own their bodies and to understand the changes in their bodies is crucial to self-esteem and making healthy choices.

HOW TO HANDLE THIS CHALLENGE:

- Be available and understanding if a girl needs support but is scared to ask questions
- Educate a girl about safe choices to deal with menstruation, like a sponge or a cloth
- Let girls know it is safe to play while menstruating
- Without judgment, explain to girls their bodies are changing which includes having to take proper hygienic care

- Talk about using soap, but keep in mind that some of the girls may not have access to soap, or that they may be new to the information. Be open,

informative and patient. This teaches girls they can trust their bodies and the information they are receiving



#4 CHALLENGE: PERSONAL SAFETY

A priority is to make sure girls not only feel safe traveling from one location to another, but also that they feel safe while participating in sport and in life skills based education games. Creating a safe space is crucial in ensuring personal safety is achieved and maintained.

HOW TO HANDLE THIS CHALLENGE:

- Engage coaches in creating a safe space
 - Stress that it is better if boys/boy-friends/brothers, etc. are never present
- at workshops and trainings so participants do not feel judged or intimidated. Uphold this and ensure there are no males present

#5 CHALLENGE: SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEXUALITY

It is possible that there are participants coming from sexually troubling backgrounds. The stigma surrounding girls who have been sexually harassed can make it hard to talk about topics surrounding sexual harassment and sexuality. Listen to participants and show trust and compassion. When an inappropriate action takes place, address the participants involved.

QUICK TIP

It's important to remember that first and foremost, Girls & Football SA emphasizes the need to provide girls with a safe girls - only space, free from judgment and harassment.

HOW TO HANDLE THIS CHALLENGE:

- Dealing with sexual abuse, sexual harassment and gender-based violence is extremely hard. If a participant confides in workshop staff, ensure a high level of professionalism and sensitivity, practice discretion and discuss the events with a Girls & Football SA senior staff member as soon as possible. Emphasize privacy, but inform the girl she may have to see a doctor, be understanding and if necessary, seek medical assistance.

#6 CHALLENGE: SCHEDULING

Although participants may greatly enjoy staying after school to participate in workshops, it is important to bear in mind that girls may be expected at home to take care of younger siblings or to perform other domestic tasks.

HOW TO HANDLE THIS CHALLENGE:

- Schedule games and workshops close to school hours and try to avoid times and days that might conflict with religious holidays/commitments and harvest or planting seasons
- Provide an alternative solution, encourage the participants to share times and dates that work for them, in addition to attending the mandatory weekly schedule

#7 CHALLENGE: MYTHS SURROUNDING SPORT

In some cultures there is a belief girls may lose their virginity while playing sport. Through running, jumping or kicking it is thought the hymen may tear. In cultures where virginity is important prior to getting married, this can pose a serious challenge. Proper steps should be taken to counter this myth with sensitivity.

HOW TO HANDLE THIS CHALLENGE:

- Educate girls, caregivers and teachers about girls' maturing bodies in a safe and nonjudgmental space where a girl feels she can trust peers and trainers. Once a level of comfort has been established, introduce facts about sexual intercourse, reproduction and loss of virginity
- Encourage girls to 'own' their bodies. In addition to showing how (ie. by having pride and making healthy and smart choices) it is possible to talk about making healthy choices based on well-being, rather than cultural stigma



#8 CHALLENGE: LACK OF FEMALE ROLE MODELS

Girls & Football SA has consistently placed an emphasis on providing girls with positive role models, particularly through production of our documentary, “Can I Kick It?”. These are inspiring women that girls can look up to which encourages them to make smart and healthy choices. Showcasing strong women must be consistent.

HOW TO HANDLE THIS CHALLENGE:

- By introducing the participants to successful female athletes, they are surrounded by strong and inspirational women
- Regularly exposing girls to strong women in the community, and encouraging girls to talk about which women inspire them in their community encourages them to look at other girls and women in a positive light
- Ask girls what they enjoy doing with their girlfriends, their mother or their sisters. Stress the importance of recognizing non-domestic activities; particularly should the majority of the activities named be domestic, or related to domestic activities first and foremost associated with girls and women

#9 CHALLENGE: INACCURATE HEALTH INFORMATION

Girls are not provided with adequate and accurate health information. Where information is available, this may not necessarily be correct nor is it presented in a relatable and engaging way. A very important aspect of working with young female participants is providing them with adequate factual information that is easy to understand. Such open discussions can lead to talks about HIV/AIDS, sexual harassment, rape and stigma girls face.

HOW TO HANDLE THIS CHALLENGE:

- Be open, informed, and sensitive towards girls’ needs and situations. Present an open forum in which girls feel comfortable to share their stories
- Show compassion but maintain composure, particularly should participants share difficult stories
- Provide girls with accurate and adequate health information in a simple and clear way
- Provide caregivers and teachers with this information, and explain why it is being shared with the girls should questions within communities arise
- Organize sessions with mothers (and fathers, if applicable) providing information on what is shared with their daughters and how parents can do the same
- Ensure girls what they share remains confidential, but also highlight help can be sought should this be necessary
- Provide them with the tools they need to make healthy choices about their bodies, in addition to information and tips on where to get more help or resources
- Encourage sharing of health information in print only after it has been approved by Girls & Football SA staff and when it has been prepared with gender sensitive and age appropriate messages, images and explanations

8 HOW TO CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Girls & Football SA staff must display a well-rounded understanding of a safe space at all times.

A SAFE SPACE IS ONE OF THE MOST CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF GIRLS & FOOTBALL SA, BECAUSE IT ENCOURAGES THE BUILDING OF A COMMUNITY FOR GIRLS, ALLOWING GIRLS TO DEVELOP AND GROW IN A SECURE AND STABLE ENVIRONMENT.

According to a Monitoring and Evaluation carried out in May 2011 with half of the participants of Girls & Football SA workshops, 89.7% of the participants believe it is good they train with girls only. This type of trusted environment encourages an increase in open discussions, especially about sexuality, health, sexual harassment and other issues that primarily face girls.

In a safe space, girls are protected from bodily harm, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, judgment, and preventable sports injuries. They should feel free to express themselves without facing intimidation or threat, while being able to share concerns, ask questions, and build relationship with the trainers, the other participants, and the sport. Girls should be emotionally secure and supported, by both peers and fellow participants.

At Girls & Football SA, we take the establishment of this space very seriously. There is no room for dishonest behavior, and the establishment of a trusting and open environment is a priority. We achieve this by ensuring the girls practice in a 'girls-only' setting. Should there be male spectators, they are politely asked to leave. An explanation can be offered should this be necessary.

There is a possibility that girls partaking in workshops have been sexually harassed or assaulted and creating a girls-only space decreases the potential for memory triggers or fear and flashbacks to unhealthy and unsafe past experiences.

HOW TO CREATE A SAFE SPACE

- Make sure girls are not judged, not threatened and free to be themselves at all times. Don't hesitate to say to the participants, "This is a safe space"
- Build a trusting relationship with the participants. Say they are in a safe space, encourage that they know they do not have to be scared and that you want to be there for them
- Ensure the space is accepted by parents and caregivers, but not subject to external pressures from adults
- Invite the participants to share what they feel a safe space is - establish the space together and emphasize it is for girls only
- Discourage rumors and gossip and never discuss one participant with another participant
- Conduct follow up discussions if it becomes apparent the girls have more they wish to share than may be apparent initially
- Ensure there are no unwanted appearances by males or by other authority figures that may garner a strong reaction from the girls
- Physically: make sure there are no objects (glass, holes) that can hurt the participants
- Establish the rules of games and double check if there are questions after an exercise or activity has been explained
- Stress a 'no fighting' policy. If participants do fight, this must be broken up and discussed. Discuss how the participants can resolve the issues peacefully and encourage them to "re-do" the incident in a positive way
- If something seems to be wrong, from an unwelcome spectator to a girl being bullied by other participants, do not ignore this. Include other volunteers/coaches/staff if this feels like the right step to take

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING LIFE SKILLS

At Girls & Football SA, providing life skills based education through football is one of the

primary goals. Life skills based education includes focusing on issues related to anti-oppression, self-esteem, healthy sexuality, knowledge building, violence prevention and gender identity. In order to maintain a high level of life skills based education, the following standards are adhered to;

- The creation and maintenance of a safe space
- Reminding girls to respect each other, and this includes respecting each other's bodies, opinions, talents, experiences, etc.
- Encouraging participatory and peer-to-peer learning
- Allocating time for individual reflection and team work
- Encouraging girls to love the natural state of their body which allows them to feel good about themselves
- Being aware of and sensitive to physical disabilities
- Giving girls a variety of outlets for expression; different girls feel comfortable in different settings
- Tailoring conversations according to the age group in question by approaching girls with topics that relate to their age. This encourages girls to be more inclined to listen and remember group discussions
- Always maintaining the participant's confidentiality (unless it involves a case that needs to be dealt with immediately with professional/medical help or assistance or otherwise could result in serious harm)
- Planning sessions: decide which topics will be discussed. Provide clear lines of discussion around these topics

QUICK TIP

Re-affirm that being part of a sport program is meaningful by sharing personal experiences and highlighting successes of other girls and women that are admirable.

9 CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

breaking down gender stereotypes in sport

ALTHOUGH MORE AND MORE WOMEN ARE STARTING TO PLAY FOOTBALL UNIVERSALLY,

IT IS STILL CONSIDERED A MAN'S GAME.

By encouraging girls to play a sport they may not usually be exposed to, they are being encouraged to know they can achieve what they may have felt was impossible or not an appropriate domain for them to try and conquer

TIPS ON HOW TO ENGAGE GIRLS

When a relationship is built with girls from different backgrounds, it is important to establish trust and comfort. Furthermore, throughout the program, it is crucial to invest in meeting girls' emotional, physical and personal needs, and to assure challenges they may face are being properly addressed.

- Don't be forceful, demanding or judgmental, but be encouraging, supportive and firm
- Ask girls to share what they feel can be improved (this type of evaluation will be conducted officially as well, but should there be a need to perform an unofficial check-in, this is encouraged)
- Involve girls in decision-making processes, and ask them for their opinion. Making them feel heard makes a positive difference
- Where it is possible, give girls a choice so they feel they have a say in activities, games, and drills

QUICK TIP

Give girls leadership roles by encouraging them to learn from each other and make decisions. Offer them choices whenever possible; even if this is between two options for workshop games or activities. Being presented with the option of choice encourages dedication to the activity and gives a sense of ownership.

TIPS ON HELPING GIRLS DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS

- Be patient
- Ask girls to share what they feel they are good at, what they are proud of, and where they wish to improve
- Ask girls what they think their teammates are good at and why they are proud of their teammates
- Highlight examples of good leadership on and off the playing field, so girls strive to improve
- Show the girls their opinions are valued, as this will encourage them to express their thoughts and feelings
- Lead by example and be confident in choices
- Support positive role modeling
- Allow girls to choose if they want to fill leadership roles; natural leaders will step forward. Encourage girls that may be shy at first to be leaders, as they may need some extra positive reinforcement
- Encourage girls to go out and share their experiences, so their community learns about their successes
- Constantly encourage goal setting and evaluation
- Openly talk about things that may hold girls back from developing their leadership skills; such as lack of confidence, peer pressure and poor monitoring
- If disruptive behavior takes place, don't criticize the participant's efforts, rather, approach them in a sensitive manner

KEEPING GIRLS MOTIVATED

- Recognize, and reward pride in accomplishments
- To ensure participants keep returning to the workshops, it's important they feel they can relax and enjoy themselves while at the same time receiving valuable information
- Keep workshops interesting and fun by listening to feedback from the participants. If something doesn't go according to plan, focus on the things that are going to plan and present a solution

10 CONTACT

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If there are any ways you wish to contribute, if you want to send through tips or feedback, please let us know. We gladly welcome your input and look forward to hearing from you.