



MORE THAN JUST A GAME

Sport as a Communication Platform
in Sexuality Education for Adolescent Girls

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Sport as a Communication Platform in Sexuality Education for Adolescent Girls





FORD FOUNDATION

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ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEM	Gender Equitable Men
GRS	Grassroot Soccer
HTC	HIV Testing and Counseling
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
PSB	Perceived Soccer Benefits
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SMS	Short Messaging System
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNTF	United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women
U.S.	United States
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VMMC	Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision
VPUU	Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading



MESSAGE
FROM THE FORD
FOUNDATION

1

MESSAGE FROM THE FORD FOUNDATION

Throughout its history, the Ford Foundation has invested in innovative ideas, visionary individuals, and frontline institutions to advance human dignity around the world. We made our first grants in Southern Africa in the 1950s, and opened our office in Johannesburg in 1993. Today, the Ford Foundation is working to narrow the gap between the promise of democracy and the lived realities of people in Southern Africa — particularly young people, women and people whose voices too often go unheard.

We were thrilled to make our first grant to Grassroot Soccer South Africa in 2013. Grassroot Soccer had been on the frontlines of new and innovative sports-based programs for youth in South Africa and the grant allowed the organization to update and refine its highly effective SKILLZ programs for adolescent girls (such as SKILLZ Girl) - strengthening the mentoring component between Coaches and participants, and weaving material related to gender norms and stereotypes throughout the programs. Two years later, the Foundation supported the Grassroot Soccer *Kick Like a Girl* award. As a result, Grassroot Soccer was able to further improve the SKILLZ Girl curriculum, create stronger linkages to community-based sexual and reproductive health and HIV services, and develop, this year, an exciting participatory digital storytelling program.

The partnership between the Ford Foundation and Grassroot Soccer has been mutually rewarding. Together, we have been able to share ideas and insights that have contributed to the development of well-grounded, comprehensive

youth and adolescent-led programs that are making a real difference in many South African communities. In the South Africa office, we particularly value the collaborative and open way in which Grassroot Soccer has partnered with other organizations; the strong, focused leadership of the organization; and the expertise and enthusiasm of its staff and volunteers at all levels.

This report shows the power of sports-based programs to change the narrative and the lived experiences of young people, and shares invaluable knowledge and practical experience with others working in the field. At the Ford Foundation, we look forward to continuing our partnership with Grassroot Soccer in South Africa, and expanding our support to include new work on child marriage in Zambia. Working in partnership with organizations like Grassroot Soccer, we believe we can have a real impact on reducing social and gender inequality while, at the same time, increasing opportunities, particularly for girls, across Southern Africa.



Eka Esu Williams
Program Officer, Gender and Youth
Ford Foundation Office of Southern Africa



**PURPOSE
OF THIS
REPORT**

2

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Since Grassroot Soccer's founding in 2002, research has been vital to our organizational growth and development. Research and innovation shape our curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation processes, and organizational strategy. This report examines our sport and sexuality education programs for adolescent girls in South Africa, also expanded throughout sub-Saharan Africa, with broader literature complemented by unique insights and recommendations from our work. Grassroot Soccer learns by evaluating our work scientifically, and we have seen that the process of engaging adolescent girls in a well-designed, sport-based, inclusive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) program can be gender transformative, and results in a range of positive outcomes for girls and their broader communities.

We have also learned that young people want to learn about sexuality more broadly, as opposed to separating issues such as HIV, gender, relationships, power, violence, safety, sexuality and identity. We recognize that young people are too diverse an audience to group together meaningfully in sexuality education. Grassroot Soccer is thus striving to understand the ways in which sex, age, gender and socialization shape what is appropriate messaging for adolescents. We understand the need to involve youth in these processes and work with adolescents and peer educators to design interventions that relate to their identities and experiences.

This report draws on recent Grassroot Soccer research

projects in South Africa to illustrate sport's potential as a communication platform in sexuality education, in particular for adolescent girls. Five broad themes emerged from these projects that highlight the unique contributions that well-designed Sport for Development initiatives can make to improve sexuality education and SRHR outcomes:

1. **Sport is engaging**
2. **Sport is physical**
3. **Sport is gendered**
4. **Sport is empowering**
5. **Sport is about relationships**

This report is intended for communities, development practitioners, research institutions, governments and donor agencies. We hope that the insights herein will help to guide the design of future interventions and research on the use of sport in sexuality education.

I would like to thank everyone who made this report possible, including generous support from the Ford Foundation. This report is dedicated to all of our communities, partners and supporters who continue to strive for gender justice and the wellbeing of adolescent girls across Southern Africa.



Ben Sanders

Managing Director, Grassroot Soccer South Africa



{ GRASSROOT
SOCCER }

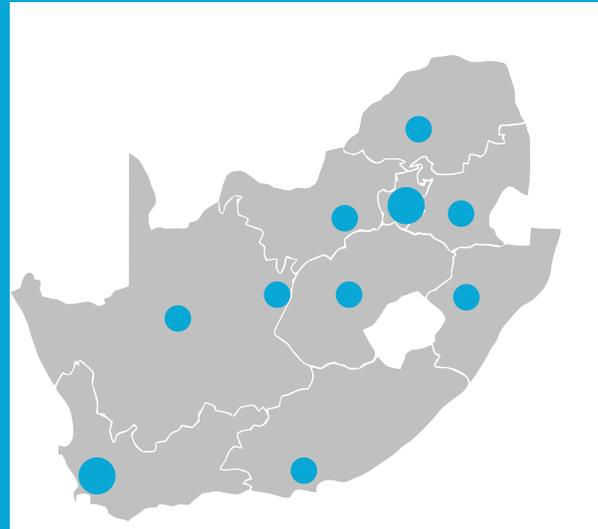
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GRASSROOT SOCCER

Grassroot Soccer is an international adolescent health organization that leverages the power of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilize youth in developing countries to overcome their greatest health challenges, live healthier, more productive lives, and be agents for change in their communities. Grassroot Soccer uses the power of soccer to connect young people with the mentors, information, and health services they need to thrive, and empower adolescents to make educated choices about pressing health challenges such as HIV, sexual health, gender-based violence, and malaria. With proven results and a constant focus on research and innovation, Grassroot Soccer has reached over 1.7 million young people in nearly 50 countries with adolescent-friendly health education.

Globally, Grassroot Soccer is expanding its proven, cost-effective programs to empower more young people to lead healthier lives and strengthen their communities, and continues to develop innovative, high-impact strategies to help at-risk adolescents access vital health services through its flagship programs (South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and partnerships. Since opening in South Africa in 2006, Grassroot Soccer has worked in nine provinces, trained over 500 peer mentors (Coaches), graduated 220,000 youth, tested 35,000 at-risk youth for HIV, and distributed HIV prevention education materials to millions of South Africans through schools and mass media information campaigns.

Grassroot Soccer in South Africa



The Grassroot Soccer Approach

- 1** Adolescents learn best from people they respect. Positive role models have a unique power to influence young minds. Adolescents listen to and emulate their heroes.
- 2** Learning is not a spectator sport. Adolescents engage in critical thinking, awareness and sharing when they are active participants in the learning process, teaching others what they themselves have learned.
- 3** It takes a village. Role models can change what young people think about, but learning and behavior change requires support from parents and guardians, educators, peers and the community.



{ CONTEXT }

4

CONTEXT

ADOLESCENT HEALTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

For most young people, adolescence is a time of vibrancy, discovery, innovation and hope. Adolescence is also the time when puberty takes place, when many young people initiate their first romantic and sexual relationships, when risk-taking is heightened and 'fitting in' with peers becomes very important.¹ It can also be a challenging time for young people, when girls' and boys' lives begin to differ dramatically in terms of schooling, mobility, domestic responsibilities and sexual and reproductive health, and gender disparities emerge - most markedly with access to resources and opportunities. Adolescents rely on their families, peers, educators and health service providers for affirmation, advice, information and the skills to navigate the sometimes-difficult transition to adulthood.

This transition may catalyze a range of issues that can impact negatively on the development and welfare of young people, particularly for young women,² including HIV infection, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unintended pregnancy, and poor education attainment. As adolescent girls (ages 9-14) mature they become increasingly vulnerable to HIV, pregnancy, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), all of which have significant effect on lifetime physical, psychosocial and educational outcomes.

While SGBV is a significant threat to the health and wellbeing of adolescent girls and young women - and a driver of HIV prevalence among adolescent girls and young women in South Africa - the core drivers are economic inequality and emerging forms of sexual partnering such as age-disparate sex, multiple partners and transactional sex. Early sex is also a major factor affecting HIV vulnerability because of physiological factors.

Across most of the world, gender norms and values are continuously adapting and changing, and modernity across cultures is continuously reshaping gender norms, values and practices that can influence health-related behaviors and outcomes.^{3,4} However, in many cases, laws in place do not reflect the community context.

In a recent GenderLinks study in South Africa, it was reported that "77% of women in Limpopo; 51% of women in Gauteng; 45% of women in the Western Cape and 36% of women in KwaZulu Natal report experiencing some form of violence (emotional, economic, physical or sexual) at least once in their lifetime both within and outside their intimate relationships."⁵

The South African Constitution is one of the most progressive in the world, enshrining the right of women to live free from violence - yet women and children are neglected and abused on a daily basis.⁶ Due to patriarchal societal norms and unequal power relations pervasive in South Africa, the onus of violence prevention is placed on women - while at the same time, failures in the legal system discourage the majority of survivors to report rape or violence.⁷



SEXUALITY EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Practitioners and advocates working in the field of adolescent health need creative interventions to address gender and power, including the use of sport as a communication tool for sexuality education, storytelling and the representation of women.

Grassroot Soccer's sport-based programming empowers girls to seek sexual and reproductive health services and provides a safe space to address harmful gender norms, gender-based and intimate partner violence, sexuality and relationship issues.

Sexuality is a fundamental aspect of human life: it has physical, psychological, spiritual, social, economic, political and cultural dimensions; and few adolescents receive adequate preparation for their sexual lives, approaching

adulthood with conflicting and confusing messages about sexuality. This is often exacerbated by embarrassment, silence and disapproval of open discussion of sexual matters by adults, including parents and teachers, at the very time when it is most needed.

There are many settings globally where young people are becoming sexually mature and sexually active at an earlier age. They are also marrying later, thereby extending the period of time from sexual maturity until marriage.⁸ In addition, the rules that govern sexual behavior differ widely across and within cultures. Certain behaviors are seen as acceptable and desirable, while others are considered unacceptable.

Adolescence presents an opportunity in which to introduce programs that explore normative behaviors around gender and power⁹ that are relevant, youth-friendly, and non-threatening and can have lifelong positive impact. A recent review of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) programs globally¹⁰ found that programs that addressed gender and power were five times more likely to be effective in reducing STIs or unintended pregnancy than those that did not take this approach.

CSE emphasizes a holistic approach to human development and sexuality.¹¹ Research has shown that scientifically accurate, culturally and age-appropriate, gender-sensitive and life skills-based CSE, can provide young people with the knowledge, skills and efficacy to make informed decisions about their sexuality and lifestyle, effectively delay sex among young people, and increase condom and overall contraceptive use among sexually active youth.¹² UNESCO

and other international agencies recommend using or building off the **Kirby Characteristics** of effective CSE programs. Within the 17 Kirby Characteristics,¹³ Grassroot Soccer focuses specifically on 13 characteristics related to sexuality curricula in its work.

*Kirby Characteristics of Effective Sexuality Education Curriculum*¹⁴

- Focus on clear goals in determining curriculum content, approach and activity, which include the prevention of HIV, other STIs and/or unintended pregnancy.
- Focus narrowly on specific risky sexual and protective behaviors leading directly to these health goals.
- Address specific situations that might lead to unwanted or unprotected sexual intercourse, and how to avoid or remove one's self from these situations.
- Provide clear messages about behaviors to reduce risk of STIs or pregnancy.
- Focus on specific risk and protective factors that affect particular sexual behaviors that are amenable to change by the curriculum-based program (e.g. knowledge, values, social norms, attitudes and skills).
- Employ participatory teaching methods that actively involve students and help them internalize and integrate information.
- Implement multiple, educationally sound activities designed to change each of the targeted risk and protective factors.
- Provide scientifically accurate information about the risks of having unprotected sexual intercourse and the effectiveness of different methods of protection.
- Address perceptions of risk.
- Address personal values and perceptions of family and peer norms about engaging in sexual activity and/or having multiple partners.
- Address individual attitudes and peer norms concerning condom use and contraception.
- Address both skill development, and the self-efficacy to use those skills.
- Cover topics in a logical sequence.



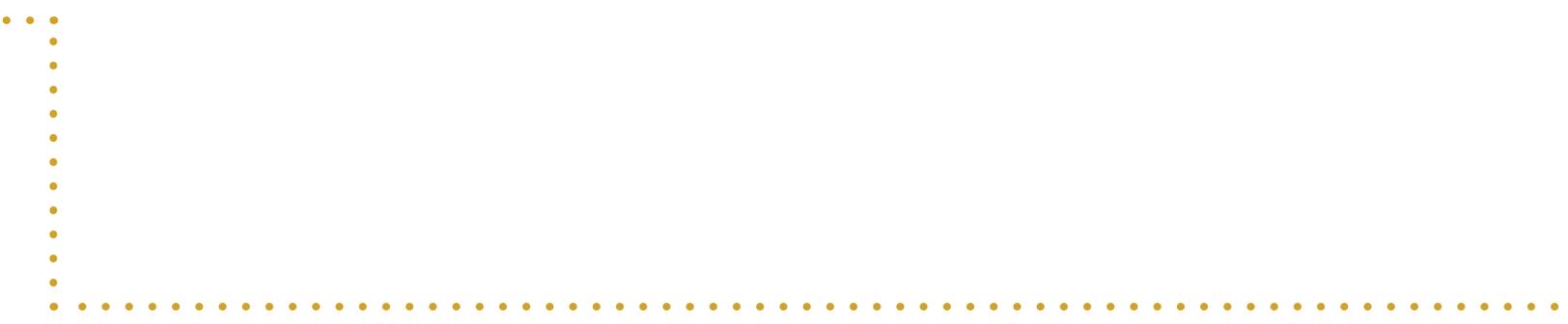
SPORT AS A COMMUNICATION PLATFORM IN SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Benefits of Sport for Development

Sport for Development as a tool for social change – and soccer specifically – offers an exciting platform for intensifying sexuality education and HIV and gender-based violence prevention efforts across Southern Africa, helping to promote self-esteem and supporting the development of protective communication and life skills. Sport role models (including well-known athletes and peers), and sports activities and metaphors can increase knowledge, improve attitudes, and change behaviors related to HIV.

The potential benefits of integrating sport into development initiatives are many and wide-ranging, including:

- Improving health, well-being and reducing the likelihood of major diseases ¹⁸
- Social mobilization, bridging divides and bringing communities together ¹⁹
- Playing a major role in the education system and instilling core values ²⁰
- Adding economic value through employment and improved productivity ²¹
- Increasing awareness of the human body and respect for the environment
- Offering healthy alternatives and contributing to holistic development of youth ²²
- Promoting cross cultural dialogue, tolerance, conflict transformation and peace ²³
- Offering an accessible form of communication for sensitive issues (e.g. HIV)
- Subverting gender stereotypes and empowering women and girls ²⁴
- Uplifting people with disabilities and other marginalized groups ²⁵
- Providing volunteer opportunities and increased employability ²⁶



Grassroot Soccer was founded with the belief that sport has massive potential to positively impact young people’s health and wellbeing.

In the last decade, sport-based programs have been recognized as effective means of empowering young people, increasing their knowledge, promoting communication, negotiation skills, and improving self-efficacy and leadership.¹⁵

The organization’s approach to health promotion is grounded in harnessing the potential of sport to include dynamic interpersonal lessons and meaningful conversations, and to inspire action in relation to health and wellbeing. A core element of the organization’s work is Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, which posits “people learn from one another, via observation, imitation and modeling,”¹⁶ and Social Cognitive Theory, in which self-efficacy is influenced by others and can determine not only their ability to succeed, but also the world around them.¹⁷

Play and Games

Grassroot Soccer embeds health information within dynamic sport-based activities to ensure young people access vital health information and hold meaningful discussions on the topics relevant to their health and wellbeing. The organization employs interactive learning structures, participatory activities, role modeling and positive peer influence, with the aim of increasing young people’s self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is integral to knowledge, attitudes and behavior change among both Grassroot Soccer peer mentors and participants.

Providing a safe space to engage adolescents, discuss sexuality and relationships, deconstruct harmful gender norms, and encourage participants to seek sexual and reproductive health services, Grassroot Soccer’s **SKILLZ** programs are delivered by peer mentors ages 18-24 from the community – Grassroot Soccer **Coaches** – in school, after-school and via holiday camps, using a combination of soccer metaphors and interpersonal activities, play and games, home visits, SMSs and community events.

MAKE THE CUT



SKILLZ

SISTERS AND BROTHERS EDITION 3

WWW.SKILLZ.CO.ZA

SOCCER FOR LIFE



PLAY LIKE A GIRL PORTIA MODISE

STREET
SKILLZ

WITH MATTHEW BOOTH

KNOW
THE GAME

LEARN THE RULES OF
THE GAME

BUILD
YOUR TEAM

DIDIER DROGBA AND
SUPPORT IN YOUR
COMMUNITY

MAKE YOUR
MOVE

DESHREE ELLIS
PLAYING SOCCER IN SOUTH
AFRICA

Published by
GRASSROOTSOCCER

The Language of Sport

Grassroot Soccer bases programming on engaging adolescents with a common language they use and understand – sport, and more specifically, soccer. Adolescents are exposed to sport language within their teams, at school, and through popular culture and media, and as a result, sport language and metaphor has proven an effective way to convey lessons and messaging. Grassroot Soccer participants are referred to as **Players**, facilitators (peer mentors) are **Coaches**, and classes are **Teams**. All players and Coaches sign a **SKILLZ Contract** when they join the team – similar to a professional soccer player signing a contract with a new team – to express commitment to Grassroot Soccer’s core values of participation, support and taking action. Participants are presented with scenarios where soccer players face red card (high risk) situations on the pitch and in life, and discuss healthy ways to face these challenges. Additionally, the organization uses the influence of professional soccer players to share their stories on being successful in soccer and in life.

Grassroot Soccer behavior change communication materials utilize professional soccer players to promote positive role models and make messages stick. (Top) *Make the Cut* poster encouraging Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision features Mkhupali Masuku of the Zimbabwe Highlanders (L) and Bacary Sagna of Manchester City (R). (Bottom) *SKILLZ Magazine* raising awareness of women’s soccer features South African National Banyana Banyana striker Portia Modise.

.....Sport Routines

Adolescents crave structure and a safe environment in which they can learn and grow. Grassroot Soccer mirrors the routines and rituals of team sports to create a consistent setting in which players can learn sensitive health information and practice ways to use that information. In soccer, teams warm up their bodies before playing. In Grassroot Soccer programs, participants also warm up their brains by sharing initial views and experiences on the theme of the practice.

Similar to the way that professional soccer coaches share stories from their playing days, Grassroot Soccer Coaches share **Coach's Stories** at set times during the activities, in which they present and discuss real challenges they have faced and the choices they made. This is discussed in greater detail on page 38.

Each practice has one main activity, in which Coaches model skills, such as positive communication and self-control, which can lead to success in soccer. Two of Grassroot Soccer's sexuality education activities, *Risk Field* and *Breakaway*, are demonstrated on pages 15-16.

Finally, successful soccer teams have a game plan; in Grassroot Soccer, Coaches utilize **Team Time**, in which participants make action plans on how they will use what they learn in real life. During **Team Time**, Coaches transition from the primary activity, to discussions with participants about how they can transfer these skills to their home, school and social experiences.



Coach George Ndamane leads a **Team Time** discussion with *SKILLZ Street* participants.

In Grassroot Soccer's activity **Risk Field** (Figures 1-2), participants learn how to avoid risky behaviors and how these behaviors lead to a higher chance of contracting HIV. Participants form teams and line up behind rows of small cones labeled with risky behaviors (i.e. condom use, multiple partners, older partners, mixing sex with alcohol), and take turns dribbling the ball through the cones in three rounds. **Team Time** is built into each round so players can discuss the effects of risky behaviors and how they can lead to the spread of HIV at the individual, relationship and community levels.

Round 1: Hit a cone and the player does a set of push-ups or star-jumps, to demonstrate the effect on an individual.

Round 2: Hit a cone and the whole team does a set of push-ups or star-jumps, to demonstrate the effect on family, friends and relationships.

Round 3: Hit a cone and both teams do a set of push-ups or star-jumps, to demonstrate the effect on the community.

In the activity **Breakaway** (Figures 3-4), participants practice *running away* from HIV infection (being clear that the player represents the virus, and **not a person with HIV**). First, the *striker* runs away from a teammate who represents *HIV*. In this round, the *strikers* have no sexual partners and most players avoid being tagged. This facilitates a discussion on how avoiding sex is the most effective way to prevent HIV infection.

In the second round, a soccer ball represents a sexual partner. The *striker* dribbles a soccer ball while trying to avoid *HIV*. More *strikers* are tagged in this round, which facilitates a discussion on how sexual intercourse is the most common way HIV is transmitted in Southern Africa.

In the third round, the *striker* tries to dribble two balls at the same time, representing having two sexual partners at the same time. Many more *strikers* are tagged this round, opening up a discussion on the high risk of having multiple sexual partners.

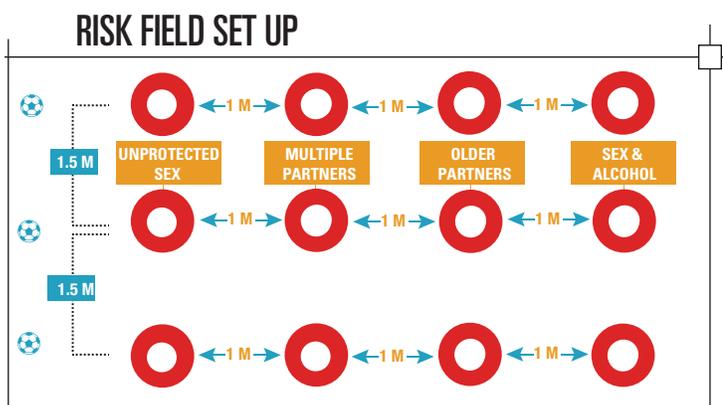


Figure 1

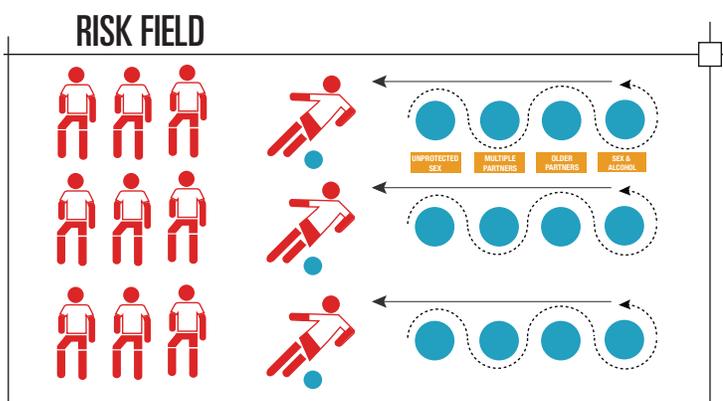


Figure 2



SKILLZ Banyana participant Okuhle Nongogo dribbles the soccer ball between cones labeled with risky behaviors, such as unprotected sex, and older partners, in Grassroot Soccer's Risk Field activity.



Generation SKILLZ participants participate in Grassroot Soccer's *Breakaway* activity, in which the *striker* (L) attempts to kick the soccer balls to the goal (out of frame) while trying to avoid being tagged by *HIV*.

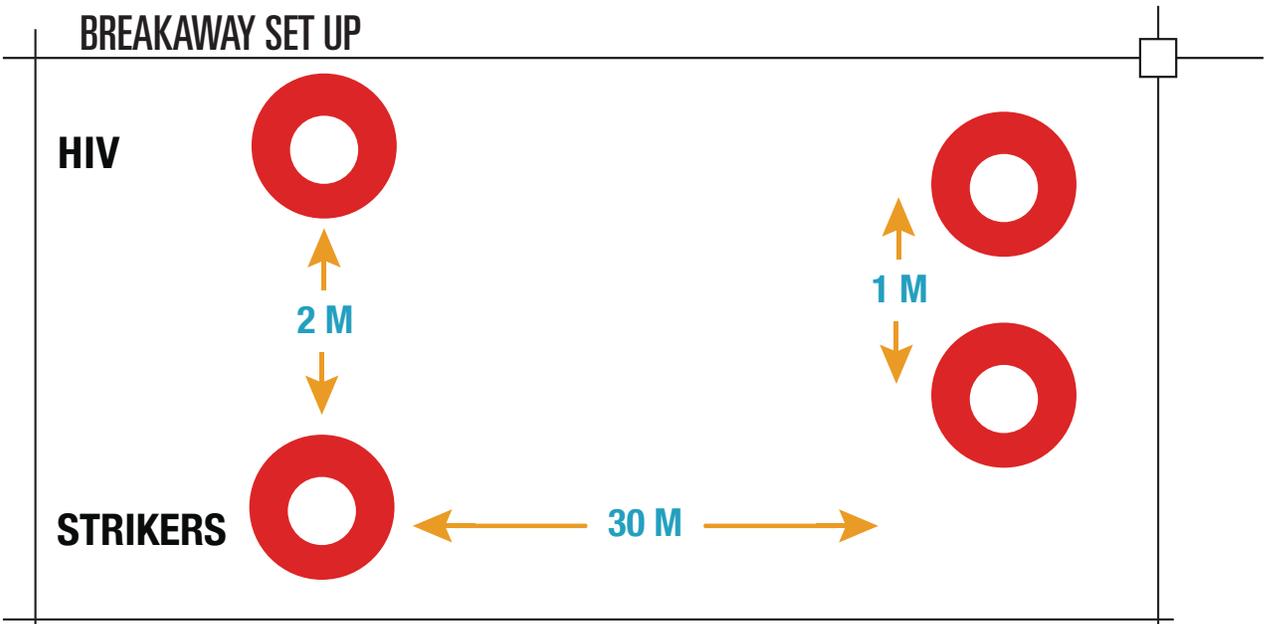


Figure 3

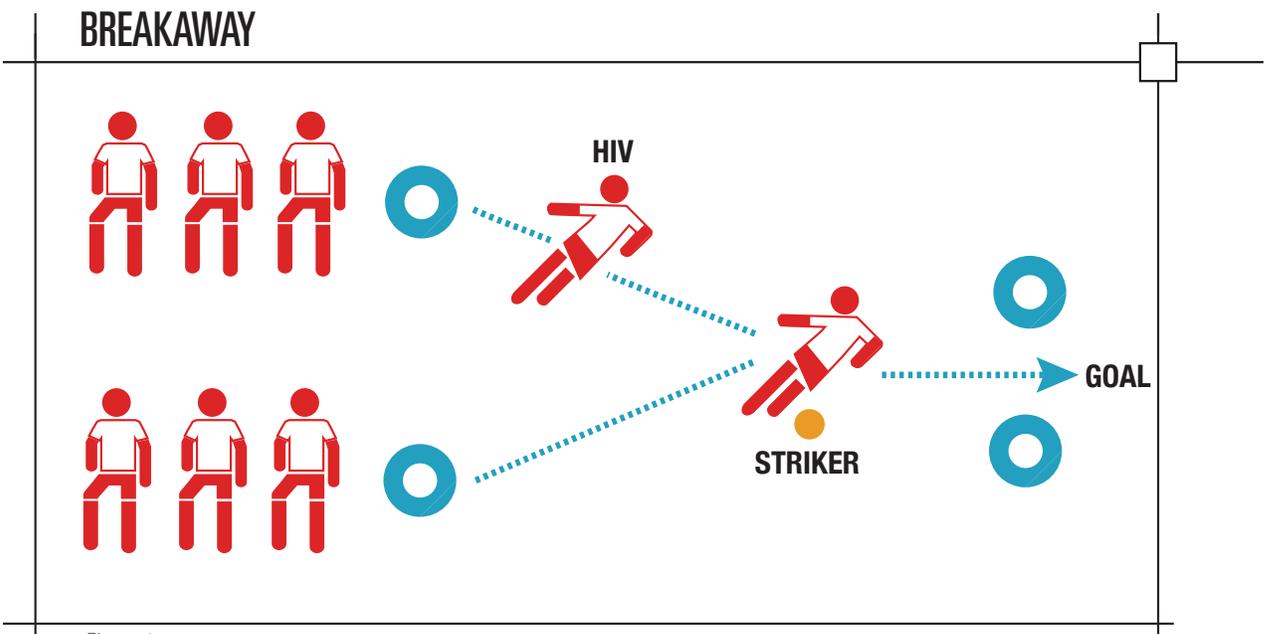


Figure 4



**INSIGHTS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

5

INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report reflects on the experiences of Grassroot Soccer and its partners, to share insights and make recommendations for practitioners, researchers and the broader development field, for how sport can be harnessed to innovate and improve sexuality education and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights. The five broad themes in this section highlight the unique contributions that well-designed Sport for Development initiatives can make to improve sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health and rights outcomes.

Sport is engaging
Sport is physical
Sport is gendered
Sport is empowering
Sport is about relationships



SPORT IS ENGAGING

Addressing Specific Knowledge Gaps and Using Play to Make Messages Stick

Sport makes learning fun in a way that improves depth of comprehension and understanding, particularly when it comes to uncomfortable or taboo concepts.

The South African 2012 National Prevalence, Incidence and Behavior Survey²⁷ found that only **29%** of females age 15 and older have comprehensive HIV knowledge, though relatively high levels of knowledge exist on specific elements. Most adolescents know for example that condoms reduce HIV risk, but it is important to examine the data deeply to find specific knowledge gaps and avoid generalizations about *HIV knowledge* as a single concept.

Young women in South Africa were found to perceive older men as more responsible and risk averse than younger men, and therefore less likely to be living with HIV,²⁸ increasing the perceived attractiveness of such age-disparate partnerships. A very high HIV prevalence of 29.5% was found among girls ages 15-19 in sexual partnerships with

men who were five or more years older than themselves.²⁹ These perceptions, however, are **inaccurate** but in keeping with evidence that individuals' perceptions of their own risk of contracting HIV can be remarkably inaccurate.³⁰

As part of its all-girl sexuality education program, **SKILLZ Street**, Grassroot Soccer developed the educational game **HIV Limbo** (Figure 5) to address the increased risk of HIV infection when having a sexual partner who is five years older or more. The game also talks about power in relationships, the pressure to have sex, and risks and consequences of older partners. In **HIV Limbo** (Figure 5), teams begin in Round One with the limbo stick high in the air so that it is easier for players to pass onto the next round, representing a sexual partner of the same age. The game gets progressively more difficult as the rounds continue, with Round Two representing a sexual partner who is five years older than the player, and Round Three representing a sexual partner who is ten years older.

SKILLZ Street

SKILLZ Street is a 20-hour soccer-based sexuality education program for adolescent girls ages 12-16. The program is delivered by female mentors and uses the power of soccer to create a safe space for girls to play soccer, challenge harmful gender norms, take action in their community, and have vital conversations about making healthy decisions. Activities focused on SRHR and life skills are complemented by fair play soccer, in which young women learn to play with self-generated rules and team discussions.

HIV LIMBO

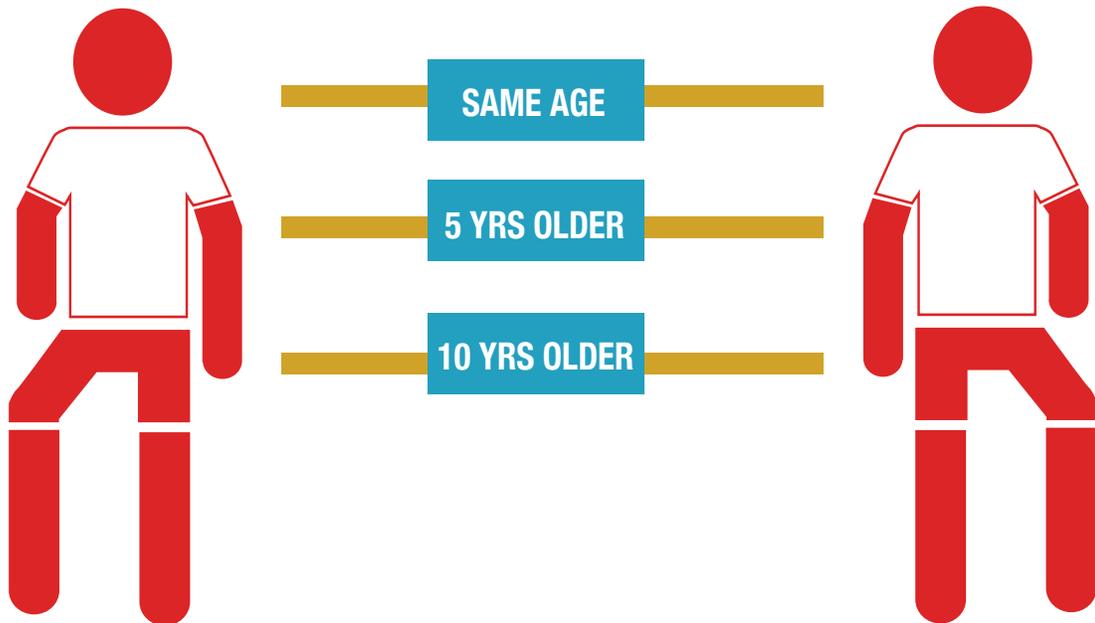


Figure 5

The Research

A random sample of female participants (ages 12-16) in Grassroot Soccer's all-girl sexuality education program, **SKILLZ Street**, completed an 18-item self-administered HIV-related knowledge, attitudes and communication questionnaire immediately before and after participation in the program, in 2015 (n=1,214). The study found that 91% of girls who completed the **SKILLZ Street** program knew that having sex with an older partner increases their risk of getting HIV, representing a 14% increase (p<0.001).

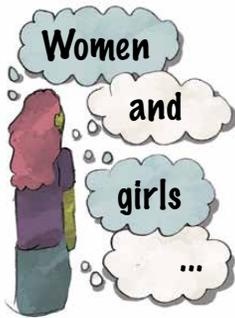
When Grassroot Soccer started working to address violence and sexual violence, one important knowledge gap that emerged was post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV infection. **Only 24%** of girls knew that if they were sexually violated, PEP could reduce their risk of getting HIV by taking the medication one to three days (72 hours) after unprotected sex.

To address this knowledge gap, Grassroot Soccer designed an informational session with experts from local service providers, introducing adolescent girls to nearby health service providers in a setting where they feel comfortable. In Soweto, Grassroot Soccer has worked with social workers from the Thuthuzela Care Center – a post-rape medical and legal care facility that exists countrywide. Bringing service providers into a place that “belongs” to adolescent girls and young women is a simple step that, if done well, creates demand for services.

In addition, Grassroot Soccer provides a safe space for dialogue using a subtler sport ritual - the **Cool Down**. This down time at the end of a session encourages participants to reflect and review, in small teams, what they learned about PEP and what simple actions they can take. At endline, the organization found that **74% of girls knew that PEP reduced the risk of HIV infection**.

Grassroot Soccer also uses Information, Education and Communication materials to reinforce curriculum messages outside of group sessions. The **SKILLZ Diary** is a printed journal for **SKILLZ Street** participants, which provides necessary information about sexual health, HIV and STIs, contraception, gender norms, gender-based violence and details for nearby clinics. The diary contains activities to accompany each **SKILLZ Street** practice, and includes spaces for participants to reflect on what they have learned.

Grassroot Soccer's sport metaphors and rituals provide practical learning experiences where participants go through an activity, reflect on parts (or all) of the activity and draw meaningful lessons from the exercises. The metaphors help to reinforce and prolong gains in knowledge as participants remember the games, talk time and written activities, making it more likely for the messages to stick.



are at greater risk for getting HIV because of their sex and gender.

Know The Game (Practice 3)



Why Sex?

The vagina is one of the ways that HIV can enter a woman's body. The vagina is about 6 to 9 cm long. It is much bigger than the opening at the tip of a man's penis (which is about the size of the tip of a pinky finger).

There is more HIV in infected semen than the fluids in your vagina.

Semen can stay in the vagina up to 7 days after sex.

17

Why Gender?

Some women may find it difficult to ask their partners to wear condoms.

Some women don't feel they have the right to say "no" to sex.

Some women think it's good to have sex with older men.

18

SKILLZ Diary excerpt of Practice 3, Know the Game, on understanding the differences between sex and gender.

The Recommendations

- 1 Integrate sport language and metaphors into activities
- 2 Take time to reflect on issues rather than just providing knowledge
- 3 Consider using games to break down complicated concepts into smaller, more digestible parts
- 4 Accompany all messages with realistic actions that adolescents can take



SPORT IS PHYSICAL

Incorporating Play and Physical Activity into Sexuality Education During Adolescence

Despite the physical benefits of participation in sport, physical activity in adolescent girls declines between ages 13 and 16, due largely to external pressure impacting girls' ability to play, including repressive gender norms.

People are more likely to adhere to physical activity if they learned a sport in childhood, and Grassroot Soccer is working to keep girls involved in sport throughout adolescence. Promoting activity-based lessons is a great way to engage adolescent girls in play during puberty, and as they transition into adulthood.

The Research

The 2014 *Healthy Active Kids South Africa Report*²¹ found that physical activity declines significantly among adolescent girls, and Grassroot Soccer's experiences suggest that declining physical activity coincides with a larger transition around ages 13, 14 and 15. This may relate to the transition from primary to secondary school, as well as to puberty and social pressures. Generally, Grassroot Soccer finds that younger adolescent girls (10-14) are more receptive to sport than older girls (15-19), who report struggling with games and feeling "childish." Grassroot Soccer also found that perceptions around soccer and sport correspond to changes in self-efficacy and gender beliefs.

While Grassroot Soccer uses a robust social learning theory to drive its work, many Sport for Development programs do not assess how their program components contribute to developmental goals. To address this gap, Grassroot Soccer developed and tested a 16-item psychometric **Perceived Soccer Benefits (PSB) Scale** (Figure 6) in an attempt to evaluate the specific role that soccer plays as a component of its sport-based sexuality education program for adolescent girls.

PERCEIVED SOCCER BENEFITS SCALE

- 1  Soccer provides new opportunities for girls.
- 2  Girls that play soccer feel better about their bodies.
- 3  I would trust and respect my soccer coach.
- 4  Girls feel more confident if they play soccer.
- 5  I would play on a soccer team if I had a chance.
- 6  Girls on a soccer team support each other.
- 7  Girls can make friends if they join a soccer team.
- 8  I would be more eager to come to school if I could play soccer.
- 9  Playing soccer can make me more physically healthy.
- 10  Soccer will never be a career for girls.
- 11  Soccer helps a person to be more disciplined.
- 12  Female soccer players can be role models, even for boys.
- 13  Girls that play soccer are more likely to be lesbians.
- 14  Soccer fields are safe spaces for girls.
- 15  Only boys can play soccer.
- 16  Playing soccer makes me feel good about myself.

Figure 6: Grassroot Soccer's Perceived Soccer Benefits (PSB) scale was administered to adolescent female learners (n=200) in four schools in Soweto, Gauteng using a four-point Likert Scale. Total scores were divided into three categories based on the mean and standard deviation into (1) low, (2) moderate, and (3) high PSB; and associations between age, self-efficacy, and gender-equitable beliefs were tested. The reliability of the scale was tested and found to be significant (Cronbach alpha = 0.702).

Associations were found between participants reporting high PSB, and high gender-equitable beliefs (Figure 7) and self-efficacy (Figure 8), with significant differences between the different age groups as illustrated below.

At endline, perceived benefits among participants improved, with shifts mostly between moderate to higher perceived benefits. More exposure to Grassroot Soccer was associated with higher perceived benefits.

GENDER-EQUITABLE BELIEFS AMONG RESPONDENTS BY AGE, HIGHER AMONG YOUNGER GIRLS

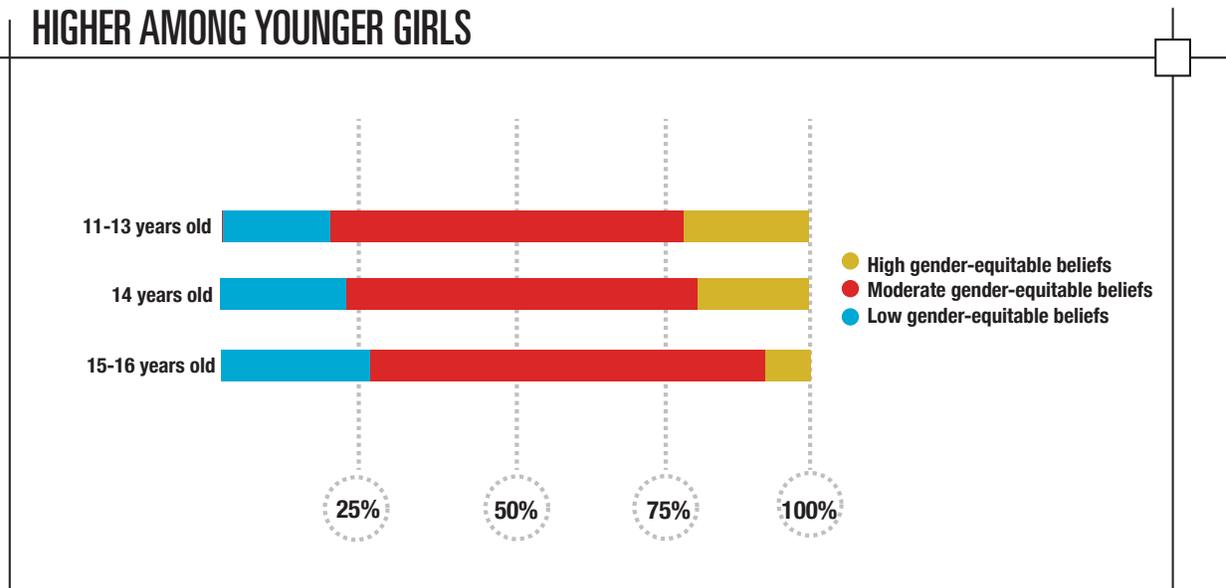


Figure 7

PERCEIVED SELF-EFFICACY AMONG RESPONDENTS BY AGE, HIGHER AMONG YOUNGER GIRLS

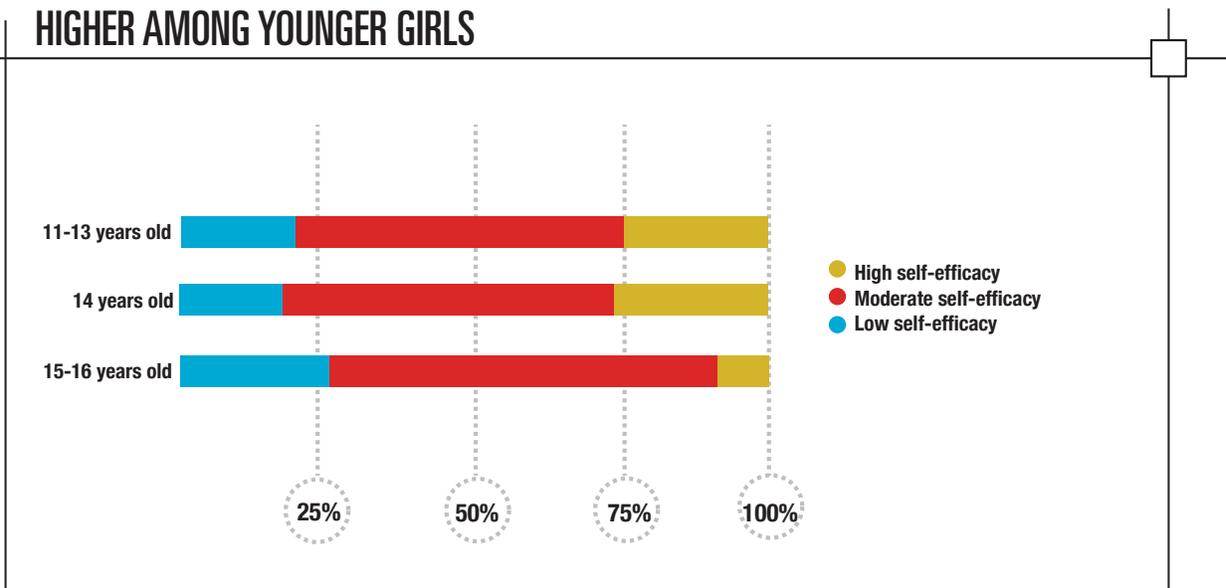
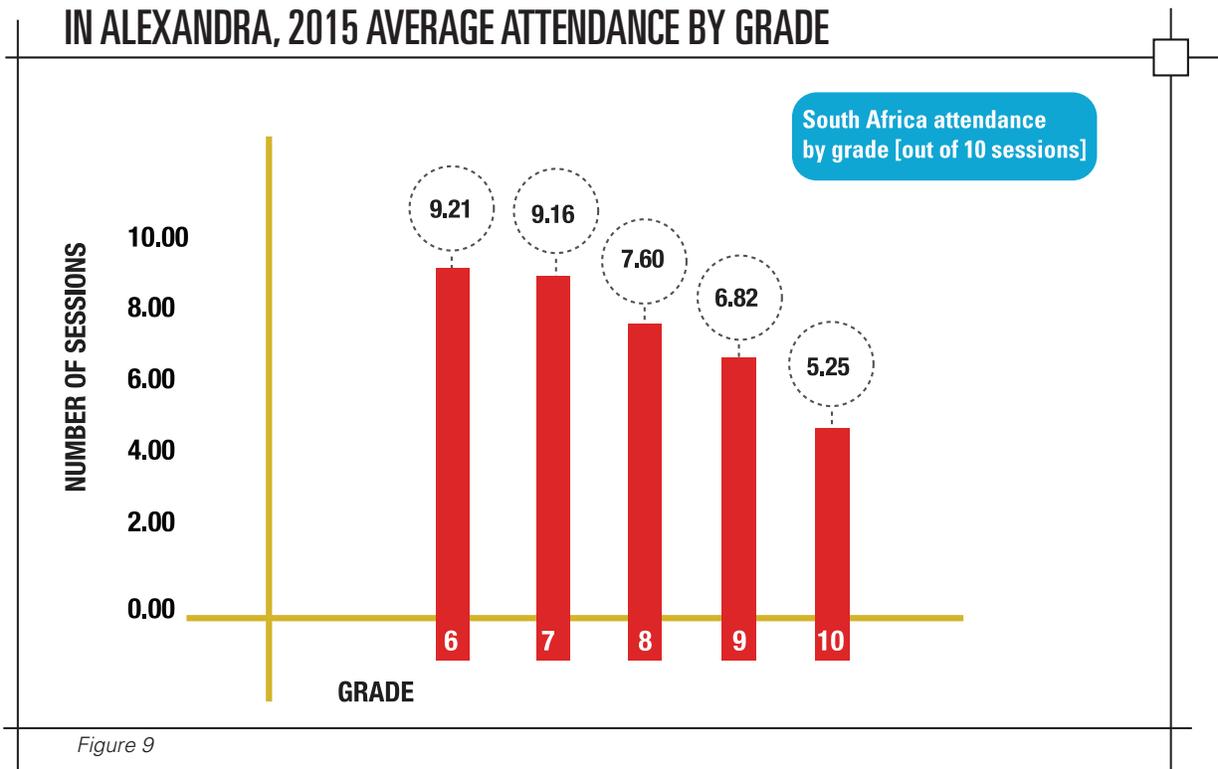


Figure 8

The changes in perceptions of sport among adolescent girls also play out in program participation. When looking at attendance rates for a sport-based after-school program for

girls (n=1,919) in Alexandra, Gauteng Province, Grassroot Soccer found a significant decline in participation from Grade 7 to Grade 10 (Figure 9).

GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN A SOCCER-BASED SEXUALITY PROGRAM IN ALEXANDRA, 2015 AVERAGE ATTENDANCE BY GRADE



The Recommendations

- 1 Consider adolescent girls' developmental transition as acute, taking place over a very short period of time
- 2 When developing programs, be explicit about when to intervene, i.e. for which age groups and for how long
- 3 Create space for physical activity and play early and often
- 4 Introduce play and movement to enhance learning while promoting physical activity

SPORT IS GENDERED



Creating Opportunities for Girls to Challenge Harmful Gender Norms through Sport

Feminist sources have long argued that women have been systematically devalued, exploited and oppressed through sport.³² Therefore, it is vital that organizations using sport as an education and communication tool understand and challenge the structures and systems that (re)produce inequality, poverty and structural issues facing women.^{33 34}

³⁵

Specifically, soccer in South Africa is perceived as a male domain, which requires Grassroot Soccer to ensure it uses the sport intentionally to challenge, rather than reinforce, this belief. In addition, there are a number of barriers to making sport attractive for adolescent girls, such as a lack of sport structures for girls, issues of safety, unequal resources, media portrayal (either lack thereof or negative) of female athletes, and the pressures put upon both girls and boys to play into their prescribed gender roles. However, it is exactly for this very reason that sport (and specifically soccer) can be used as an entry point to challenge negative stereotypes around gender and sexuality.

Most girls believe these gender norms, stereotypes and gender expectations. They don't know how to change them. But I believe we can make the situation better. Young girls must not listen to what people say. I want to encourage them. I want to do something. - Zeze, Grassroot Soccer Coach, Khayelitsha

In South Africa, women who play soccer are frequently synonymous with gender non-conforming (at best) and punished for being assumed as lesbians (at worst). In one of the most high profile cases of sport-based discrimination, Eudy Simelane, a member of the national women's soccer team Banyana Banyana, was raped and killed in 2008. This practice of "corrective rape" is a reality for women in South Africa who do not conform to gender norms – making sport participation a risky, but ultimately powerful, means of confronting those norms.

SKILLZ Banyana

SKILLZ Banyana is a soccer development program for adolescent girls ages 9-14 in primary school. The program is run after-school by female soccer Coaches in response to demand among young adolescent girls to play soccer. SKILLZ Banyana provides participants with structured soccer development, while the Coaches are trained to promote skills building, teamwork and communication. The program also works with teachers and parents to raise awareness of the value of girls' involvement in sport. In 2015, Grassroot Soccer conducted formative research to better understand the perceptions of girls' soccer among teachers, parents, Coaches and participants.

The Research

Grassroot Soccer interviewed primary school teachers and learners in schools in Khayelitsha, a township outside of Cape Town, where it runs the **SKILLZ Banyana** soccer development program for pre- and early adolescent girls (9-14 years old). A consistent theme was the possibility that playing soccer, which is traditionally a "boy's thing", would have an impact on the girls' sexual orientations and identities. Using the word "tomboy" to refer to a lesbian, local teachers' biggest concern was that girls who play soccer would feel pressured to change their behavior and/or sexual orientation, starting with the way they look, how they cut their hair and the clothes they choose to wear.

"You know, girls who play soccer, they are always associated as being boyish. Sometimes the parents see girls playing soccer and they associate them with tomboys, so I think if we can change that mindset of parents, maybe girls will play soccer and just behave normally." - Mr. S., Teacher, Khayelitsha

"Some children think that if you play soccer you are going to be a tomboy, so they don't want to play soccer." - Tumi, Grade 4, Khayelitsha

The perception that soccer is not for girls results in a lack of sport opportunities for them, which in turn contributes further to the gendered perception, creating a vicious cycle. The perception that public spaces are for men and boys is common, and sport can assist in providing women and girls with opportunities to claim public spaces.

"The biggest challenge is that there is no proper formation of girls' teams at the community level. The girls only get the opportunity to play soccer while they are here, in school, unlike the boys." - Mr. M., Teacher, Khayelitsha

Grassroot Soccer has leveraged some of these restrictive attitudes, and harnessed them, as a way to engage in important conversations with girls and boys about stereotypes and sexuality. As significant numbers of girls begin to participate in sports and female athletes gain public recognition, girls acquire new community affiliations, mentors, access to venues, and begin to more openly participate in community life. "Girls' participation in sport can in turn begin to change community norms about their roles and capacities. In this way, sport may be a catalyst for the transformation of harmful social norms."³⁶

Grassroot Soccer uses non-elite sport appropriate for girls of all physical abilities, contributing to a sense of connection among participants and Coaches and supporting rich discussions about sexuality. Grassroot Soccer has also found that when girls get the chance to play and train, they can become more proficient in the sport, and this is noticed and appreciated by teachers.

“They are very, very good. Boys are very good in terms of the physical, but technically, girls - I have noticed that. And they believe in themselves, so I think it was just the question of the background and the environment. Now, girls realize themselves that they can play soccer.”

- Mr. M., Teacher, Khayelitsha

Boys’ attitudes can change as well, once they meet girls on the soccer pitch and realize that they can compete against them physically and technically.

“There is a change because now they can see some girls are playing more than them. There is a sort of respect and understanding that it is not a boys’ thing. Anyone can play the sport, and they can also be the best in terms of sport.” - Mrs. N., Principal, Khayelitsha

Research on various Grassroot Soccer programs for adolescent girls has found that in addition to building new competencies, playing soccer in a public space offers girls new venues to come together, and break down and challenge restrictive gender norms. In addition, a Grassroot Soccer 2014 study on **SKILLZ Street**, with 289 girls (age 12.3), showed significant positive shifts in gender attitudes based on participation in sport.³⁷

The Recommendations

- 1 Create opportunities for girls to play gender non-conforming sports, to positively influence their self-perception and confidence, and shift constricting gender attitudes**
- 2 Give girls opportunities to play sport in public spaces, to help shift perceptions of community members about gender roles**
- 3 Offer alternative scenarios that challenge the hetero-normative stories proliferated in schools and in the media**
- 4 Use diverse depictions of sexuality and relationships to ensure that gender non-conforming voices are heard**
- 5 Encourage young men and boys to support and participate in women’s sport**



Dreams Have No Gender

by Zesipho (Zeze) Mankayi

I will never forget the day I played soccer for the first time.

I was 11 years old. I was wearing a Spiderman t-shirt, black shorts, and brown takkis (sneakers).

My cousin and I were out in the open space next to the garden. He kicked a ball to me ... and I kicked it back. He said, "Zeze, this time, trap it with your foot, and then pass it to me." I was soooo excited.

From that time, I played soccer almost all the time. I was so in love with it, I enjoyed every moment.

But I was shocked to see that people were not happy about this.

They would say, "Soccer is for boys, not for girls." They did not believe that anyone can play any sport. People used to call me "tomboy ...". They would say, "Even if you play soccer all the time, you'll still be a girl." Others would say, "You have to be careful, those boys you are playing with might rape you!"

I refused to stop what I love so much, just because of what people said and thought about me. I did not listen; I focused on the game. I was going to be a soccer star no matter what.

I just let their comments enter from one ear and go out the other.

Even today, a lot of people, especially boys and grown men, don't understand why girls play soccer. Why not? We all have two legs. Some of us play better soccer than boys anyway!

I play defense for an all-women's team in Khayelitsha. Last year, we won the Coca Cola Cup. It is the top prize in the biggest women's soccer tournament in the province.

I know there is nothing a boy can do that a girl cannot do.

I wish society would know it too.

I wish all girls would stand up for what they love, and I wish everyone would stop getting in the way of their dreams.

Grassroot Soccer Coach Zeze's story, **Dreams Have No Gender**, explores how gender norms and stereotypes in a typically-gendered sport such as soccer can be harmful to girls, and how powerful soccer can be at overturning the preconceived notions of femininity and gender. The story also highlights why sexuality education must address the ways in which adolescents experience gender inequality in their daily lives, and how storytelling is a powerful way to engage participants and get them to talk about their beliefs and challenges.



SPORT IS EMPOWERING

Using Sport to Build Confidence and Address Violence

Grassroot Soccer believes that building skills in soccer is transferable – it shows girls that they can develop skills in an area they may have never imagined and apply that efficacy in other domains. This transfer of skills or efficacy into other areas has emerged in particular from teachers, in relation to behavior in school.

“Most of the children are roaming around in the street, they don’t know what to do, but now they are committed. The only time they got is to practice and when they go to the stadium, because it also teaches them discipline. Maybe they are told by their Coaches on how to respect each other. They are no longer like before.”

- Mrs. N., Teacher, Khayelitsha

Self-efficacy deals with a person’s expectations of whether or not they can execute the required behaviors leading to certain outcomes.³⁸ Individuals possessing greater perceived levels of self-efficacy express more active efforts

to achieve desired outcomes. Coupled with this, Grassroot Soccer acknowledges that knowledge-based self-efficacy does not change the circumstances of vulnerability for adolescent girls, nor does it reduce risk in many instances – e.g. sexual coercion and violence, or sexual relationships motivated by severe poverty.

Grassroot Soccer uses the **SKILLZ** curricula to help create situations to affect knowledge-based self-efficacy among its participants. The curriculum is designed to promote contribution from participants – to be part of discussions, to raise their hands, to show they care about their learning. Participant engagement sounds simple enough, but many adolescents never get the opportunity to experiment when it comes to learning. Their classroom or home environment may never compel them to interact with their peers, share their views, or have open discussions with adults or teachers.

To reinforce the importance of experiential learning, Grassroot Soccer Coaches praise self-expression and participation rather than achievement – this helps participants feel that they can succeed in soccer and their knowledge will grow with their effort.

Curriculum Structure

Grassroot Soccer repurposes elements from team sport for the design of its programming and curriculum, and incorporates core structural elements in an effort to design curricula for a safe and collaborative learning environment.

Commit to a Consistent Practice Plan: Consistency and security are important preconditions for open conversations about sexuality among adolescents. Following a routine and rhythm helps participants know what to expect, which can be comforting and allow them to focus on the subject matter.

Create a Clear Behavior Code: Grassroot Soccer uses the **SKILLZ Contract** session upfront in all curricula, to outline a simple set of rules that the entire group follows.

Plan for Intentional Connectivity: Grassroot Soccer is intentional about emphasizing teamwork and communication, and developing games in steps that add actions – such as encouragement or peer coaching to help participants connect.

Practice Positive Traditions: Grassroot Soccer frequently uses song and dance, and the curriculum is structured to give Coaches opportunities to use their own creativity in small and large group settings.

Create Contribution Opportunities: Grassroot Soccer uses collaborative learning activities, but also structures curricula discussions by providing Coaches with prompts that search for key messages from within the group.

Communication Skills

Promoting communication helps participants internalize materials, develop communication skills, and build relationships both inside and outside the formal group learning. **Coach's Tips** and the **SKILLZ Diary** are some of the ways that Grassroot Soccer promotes communication throughout its curriculum, in addition to specific sessions on effective communication.

Coach's Tip:

Closing Team Time is important! Keep players engaged in group conversation for the entire period.

The Research

Grassroot Soccer's research suggests that these aspects of its approach consistently, and sometimes dramatically, increase communication about sensitive sexuality topics. Grassroot Soccer used a 19-statement self-efficacy scale³⁹ to test how the 40-hour single and mixed-sex sexuality education program improved girls' self-reported ability to make decisions regarding their own life, as well as to play a valuable role in supporting their family. The responses towards these 19 statements ranged from 'always' to 'sometimes' and 'never,' and Grassroot Soccer found a significant positive shift in reported self-efficacy (mean score at baseline 29.32 to 45.55 at endline) (Figure 10).

[SKILLZ Street] gives you confidence, like strong body language. Not only will I use it to say no to sex, but for other things as well. If you don't want it, 'No.'
- Zola, Participant, Soweto

SCALE DEMONSTRATING POSITIVE SHIFT IN SELF-EFFICACY AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS



Figure 10

“Because our kids are taught about these things, they come up to us with questions and it becomes easier to discuss these things with them, unlike having to be the one who starts the conversation.” - Mrs. S., Parent, Soweto

Part of effective sexuality education is addressing both skills and the self-efficacy to use those skills, and there is a growing body of research focused on the associations between school-based physical activity and academic performance among school-aged youth. Sport-based programs have been shown to improve the learning performance of children and young people, encouraging school attendance and a desire to succeed academically.⁴⁰

“Looking at our learners this side, they mostly like being absent from school. But since [Grassroot Soccer] came along, they have been to school at least regularly. And then at the same time, they enjoy it... and their marks have improved a lot... The improvement is so amazing... I’ve seen a vast difference in them.” - Mrs. Z., Teacher, Soweto

The links from curriculum to knowledge of, and access to, health services is another important and common feature of Grassroot Soccer’s model, and a 2014 study of across five of the organization’s sites in South Africa, published in *Sport and Society*, showed that the **SKILLZ Street** program empowers participants to uptake health services at more than four times the estimated national average.⁴¹ Girls showed improvements in HIV knowledge, gender equitable norms and communication (Figure 11), and “felt comfortable talking to Coaches about challenges they faced in their communities, often related to relationships, alcohol use or sex.”⁴²

2015 SOUTH AFRICA SKILLZ STREET PRE/POST QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

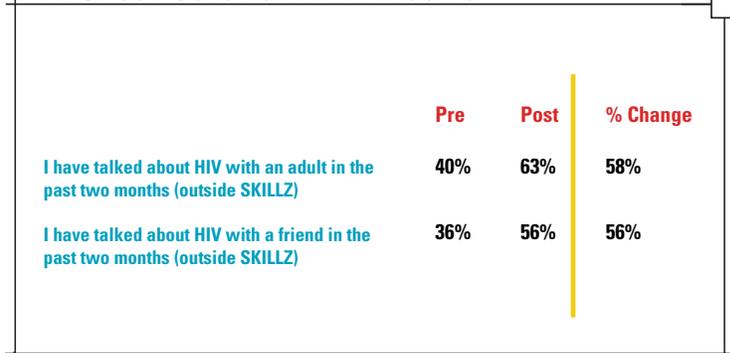


Figure 11



SKILLZ Banyana participants Ayongezwa Mdingi and Siyamthanda Ngxumza do their homework with support from their Coach.

In addition to challenging harmful social and gender norms, Grassroot Soccer also saw improved communication among female participants translate into vital areas related to romantic relationships and disclosure of violence. In a 2016 preliminary study in Soweto, Gauteng, on the Ford Foundation and United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (UNTF)-supported **SKILLZ Girl** curriculum, the organization saw noteworthy increases in the percentage of adolescent girls (n=141, average age 13.58) who do not justify any form of violence against girls (Figure 12). Significantly, Grassroot Soccer found marked improvements in participants' ability to disclose and have discussions around relationships and violence (Figure 13), as well as in reduced experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) among girls in a romantic relationship (Figure 14).

PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS WHO DO NOT JUSTIFY VIOLENCE Fewer girls justify violence against girls in both age groups

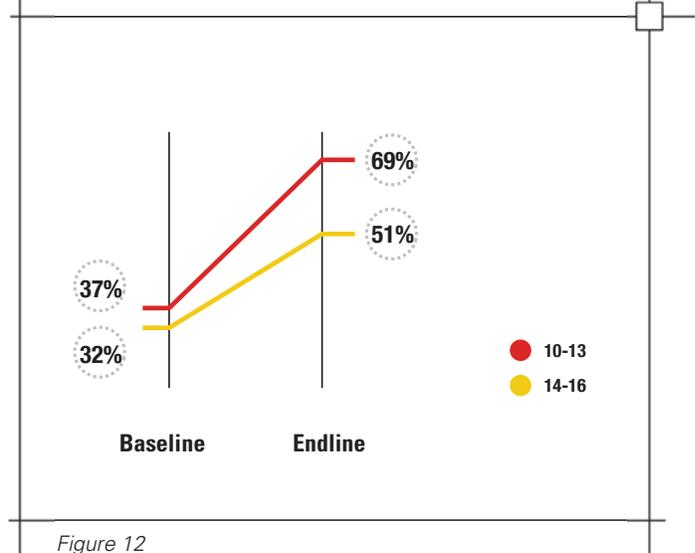


Figure 12

ABILITY TO DISCLOSE AND HAVE DISCUSSIONS AROUND RELATIONSHIPS AND VIOLENCE

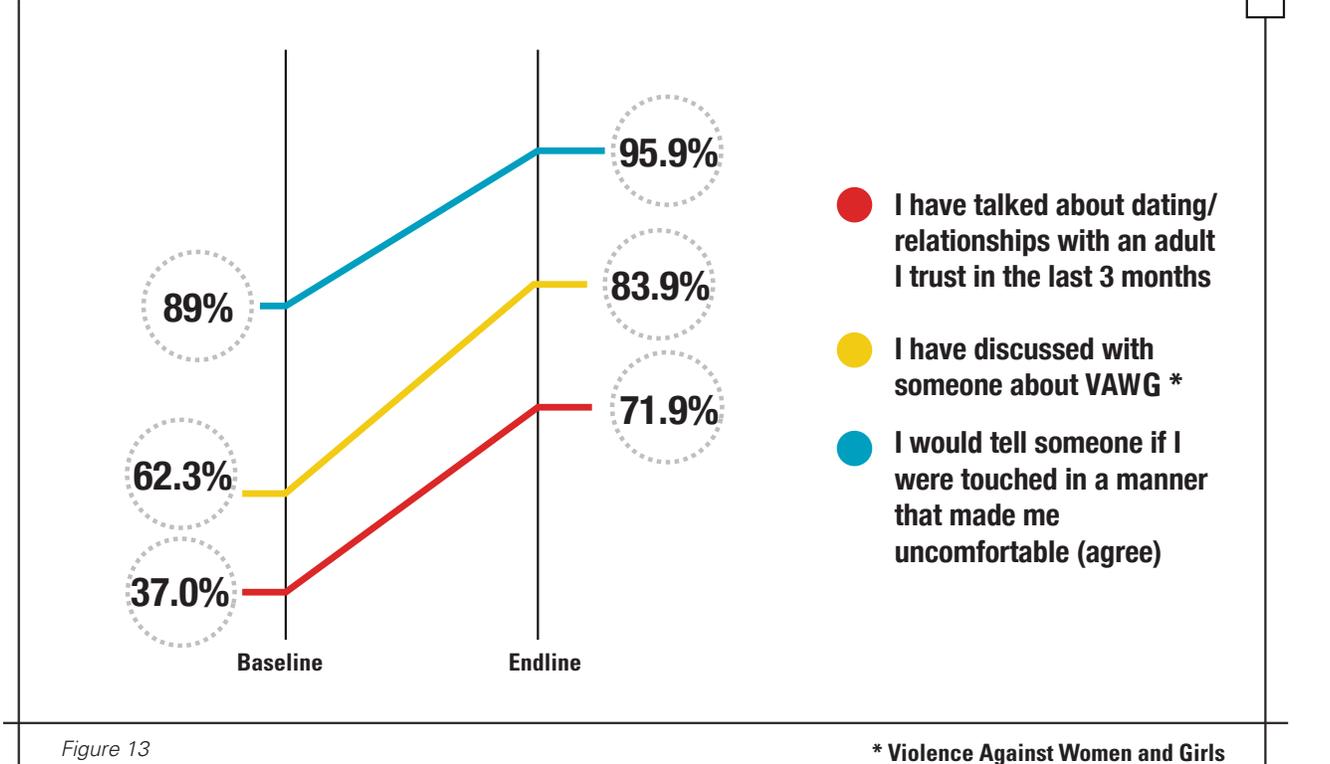


Figure 13

* Violence Against Women and Girls

* EXPERIENCES OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Decreases in self-reported experiences of violence in both age groups

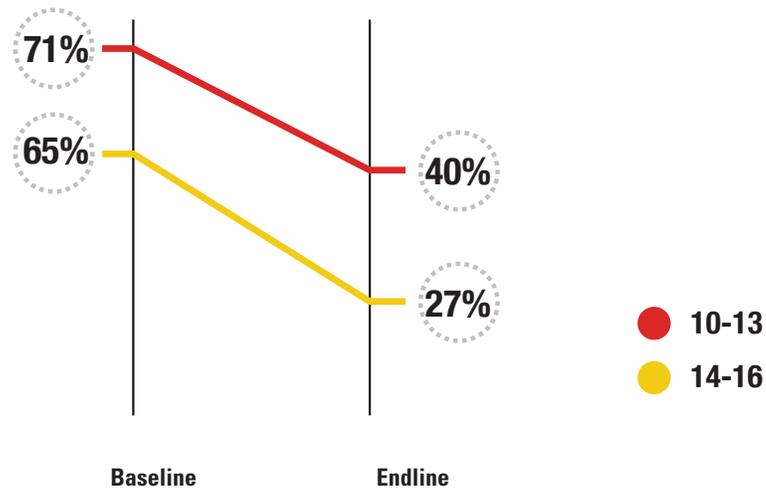


Figure 14

* girls in a romantic relationship

The Recommendations

- 1 Design sport programs intentionally and inclusively to build self-efficacy
- 2 Give participants the opportunity to meaningfully engage in both sport and life skills activities
- 3 Create a safe space for adolescent girls to discuss sensitive issues such as HIV and violence
- 4 Provide information and linkages to youth-friendly health services that adolescents can access

SPORT IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS



Building Soft Skills and Mentorship to Enhance Sexuality Education

Young people, and particularly young women and girls, benefit from having positive role models and peer support outside of traditional structures. A Coach's ability to build relationships with participants and create a positive learning environment is the foundation for Grassroot Soccer's effective sexuality education programming. Individuals learn best from people with whom they can identify – role models – who are instrumental in generating confidence and self-efficacy in others,⁴³ and Grassroot Soccer believes this is especially true with sexuality education, which is heavily context-dependent. Mentors share in the events and actions of a girls' life – girls often lack social networks they can rely on.

With proximity in age, language and culture, female participants see their Coaches as credible sources of information about sexuality and trusted confidants, which supports participants to adopt health behaviors, gain a more personal insight to the positive or negative consequences of those actions,⁴⁴ and be more likely to disclose traumatic experiences.

T-L-C: Giving Praise

Praise, when delivered effectively, is a powerful tool that Grassroot Soccer Coaches use to influence behavior and build confidence and resiliency in adolescent girls. Praise should focus on process and participation, rather than achievement. General praise is not as effective, such as 'Good job', and may miss the mark. To deliver meaningful praise, do three very specific things:

TELL IT: Give an example of what exactly is being praised – something observed and as specific as possible.

LABEL IT: Decide on a word that is exactly what the example (definition) describes.

CELEBRATE IT: Tell the participant how what they did makes others feel. 'I am impressed. Thank you for doing that.'

The Research

A trusted mentor helps adolescent girls act on their knowledge, and Grassroot Soccer’s research⁴⁵ shows that participants highly value the relationships they build with their Coaches and feel comfortable talking to them about challenges they face in their communities, often related to relationships, alcohol use or sex. Participants commonly shared the following reasons for this heightened level of comfort:

- Coaches were friendly and approachable
- Coaches encouraged and praised participants for expressing themselves
- Coaches were females

“[We were] appreciated by our Coaches throughout the entire program.” - Noxolo, Participant, Alexandra

Coaches also highly valued the Coach–Participant relationship, and felt that building trust with their participants was important, because girls would in turn be more willing to listen and follow the health behavior messaging. Coaches cited the following as effective ways to build meaningful relationships with participants: (1) be attentive and (2) be honest and open.

“I like what I’m doing because I make changes in the lives of youth, by implementing and giving them a chance in life. The girls cannot talk with their parents about things related to HIV, but when they are with us it is easy for them to talk. We’re on the same level.” - KK, Grassroot Soccer Coach, Khayelitsha

Having a trusted adult mentor may also help adolescent girls act on their knowledge or values related to their sexual

and reproductive health. Grassroot Soccer found that participants attributed their willingness to test for HIV, for example, with the support they received from their Coaches. One program design consideration for sexuality education should be the ability of the educator to support actions from participants that reinforce or help internalize the messages in sexuality education curricula, such as the Grassroot Soccer **KILO**.

Grassroot Soccer KILO

A Grassroot Soccer **KILO** is a short celebration to praise an individual or group, and consists of claps, cheers and shouts that are led by Coaches and/or participants. **KILOS** are a quick and easy way to create a fun, positive atmosphere.

Coaches Speak their Truth

The **Coach’s Story** is an impactful technique used by Grassroot Soccer that builds on the Most Significant Story Model. In this instance, Coaches orally share their personal stories with participants, at set times built into the **SKILLZ** curricula. The importance of building self-confidence and agency are central to this process, and the technique has proven a powerful tool for Coaches to connect with participants and generate dialogue on taboo subjects. This exercise also encourages participants to practice active listening, voice their concerns and experiences, and hear firsthand how their Coach overcame similar struggles, while allowing Coaches to ask for help when needed. The **Coach’s Story** – and other reflective storytelling techniques such as Digital Storytelling – replicates the concept that “sustainable individual and social change is more likely to take place when audiences know the storyteller, and are in a safe space where they feel comfortable to have meaningful and reflective dialogue.”⁴⁶

Digital Storytelling with Coaches

From March 20-24, 2016, Grassroot Soccer South Africa worked in collaboration with StoryCenter's Silence Speaks initiative, the Ford Foundation, the U.S. Consulate General and Cape Town Central Library, to lead a digital storytelling and participatory media workshop with an inspiring group of female Coaches. Over the course of five days, the young women came together to overcome representational gender stereotypes through crafting and sharing their own digital stories, which touch on overcoming gender-bias in sport, surviving gender-based violence, and the resilience it takes to thrive, in spite of deeply entrenched structural obstacles to education and viable employment.⁴⁸

Much like the **Coach's Story**, Digital Storytelling is a participatory exercise in self-confidence, reflection, awareness and voice.⁴⁷ Grassroot Soccer Coach Athi's story, **Being a Girl Among the Boys**, highlights the gap that adolescent girls in South Africa experience when it comes to female role models in sport, and the importance of mentorship to break down harmful gender norms, and encourage dialogue and behavior change.

The Recommendations

- 1 Maximize opportunities for peer engagement and mentor-driven learning**
- 2 Ensure that trusted mentors are equipped to facilitate an authentic sport-based learning experience**
- 3 Speak to adolescents about real issues without preaching or judgment**
- 4 Encourage mentors and participants to engage in self-reflection**
- 5 Create a culture of openness and safety in which stories can be shared**



Being a Girl Among the Boys

by Athiphila (Athi) Sidondi

Being a girl that loved soccer among the boys turned me into a bully, to protect what I wanted to be and what I wanted to have.

So let me take you back...

When I was 13 years old, there was no girls' soccer team. So I joined the boys' team.

You know what it means, being a girl among the boys ... It's either - you follow, you get beat up, or you lead.

So, I was a leader. But a bad one. I would do anything in my power to get them to listen to me. I was a good fighter. All my friends were boys, and I wouldn't let them beat me up. I always won.

This was the only way I could survive.

Then it happened. We didn't have bibs, so Coach asked half of us to take off our shirts, during practice. That way, we could play as shirts against skins. I ordered, "If you're on my team, we are not taking off our shirts." I didn't want them to see my breasts were starting to grow. But I couldn't go against our Coach. I was so embarrassed. I couldn't believe it when no one seemed to notice I was a girl.

Somehow, my teammates didn't realize it until the day they saw me wearing my school uniform. They were shocked to see me in a skirt, but they didn't say anything to my face. They were scared of me. I think Coach knew I was a girl, but because I was good, he didn't say anything either. As I got better, I was asked to play on an older team. My new teammates knew right away. They started ganging up on me.

From that time, Coach decided to make a girls' team. Finally, I felt safe. It was much easier playing with girls. I didn't have to protect myself, I didn't have to hide anything. The other girls even looked up to me as a leader and made me Captain.

Now I coach soccer for girls. I tell my team all the time, "You shouldn't have to be a bully to do what you love."

I'm helping girls believe in themselves, and be proud of being girls.

I am now the mentor I wish I'd had.



CONCLUSION

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CONCLUSION

Sport-based programs, when intentionally designed and implemented, can transform how sexuality education is conducted. Soccer in particular can be a powerful tool in shifting negative gender norms and stereotypes, and, when paired with evidence-based curricula implemented by a peer mentor, can have significant impact on health and wellness for adolescents, and adolescent girls in particular.

How can practitioners integrate these approaches?

This report seeks to share potential guiding principles and suggestions for development practitioners, researchers, donors and government agencies, schools and teachers.

1. Sport is Engaging: Sport-based programs have the advantage of being fun and interactive. Sport metaphors and language can be useful in making difficult, uncomfortable or complex health messages stick. Sport-based programs are also particularly effectual when they address specific knowledge gaps or assumptions that contribute to negative behaviors.

2. Sport is Physical: Participation in sport has significant follow-on benefits for health, confidence and self-efficacy among women and girls, but must be engaged in and encouraged early in order to maximize those benefits.

3. Sport is Gendered: It is critical to recognize the potential of sport-based programs to have an inherent means to combat pervasive and constricting gender norms which limit women and girls' abilities to exercise their rights and achieve better sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Sport can provide a framework and context to challenge dominant gender narratives and open the space for more open conversations about sex and sexuality.

4. Sport is Empowering: Participating in sport conveys more than just physical benefits to young women and girls. It increases self-efficacy and confidence, and builds social assets.

5. Sport is About Relationships: Sport-based programs implemented by trained peer mentors are particularly effective at conveying critical information and building bridges between young people and structures and services that are often viewed as inaccessible or distant.

What's next for Grassroot Soccer?

Grassroot Soccer seeks to ensure continued relevance to adolescent girls' experiences of sexuality education, gender equity, harmful gender norms and gender-based violence, and continues to investigate ways for its approach to have a greater impact on key drivers of negative health outcomes that disproportionately impact women and girls in South Africa. To alter the vulnerability of adolescent girls requires an approach that integrates adolescent boys, young men, parents, schools, educators, health facilities and communities. Programming should not only focus on and work with adolescent girls, but should also include a substantial reshaping of gender-related (and context-related) vulnerabilities for the range of people reached by Grassroot Soccer activities.

Two key areas that Grassroot Soccer sees the potential to explore further are (1) the absence of positive media and female athlete role models, and (2) engaging men and boys as allies in the prevention of gender-based violence.

Grassroot Soccer understands that girls and women continue to be marginalized in many facets of their lives, including access to sport and physical activity, and recognizes that adolescent girls are particularly at risk of HIV, teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence (as well as other risks) and that these risks increase throughout adolescence.

In addition, Grassroot Soccer acknowledges that sport is not a magic, or stand-alone, solution to such complex and deep-seated issues, and believes that well-designed, participatory sport-based sexuality education programs can empower adolescent girls to level the playing field in South Africa and beyond.

We call on you to join us to help **Change the Game for Adolescent Girls**.

Sekunjalo Ke Nako – Now is the Time!







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SpeakUP!

Young Women Tell Powerful Stories From Their Own Lives

A Collection of Seven Digital Stories
(Running Time 22 minutes)



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These personal stories are about overcoming gender-bias in sport, surviving gender-based violence, and the resilience it takes to thrive in spite of deeply entrenched structural obstacles.

Content Advisory: Aphwe's story and Happy's story address issues of violence.

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