



Turning Oppression into Empowerment through Sports and Physical Activity

Bangladesh
KISHORI
Adhikar Forum

From the early stages of life, Bangladeshi girls are taught to be dependent on and submissive to men. They are kept ignorant of their basic human rights which limit their broader education, choice in marriage, career aspirations, personal safety and even something as simple as jogging or cycling on the streets.

A woman taking charge of her own body is culturally unacceptable. Trying to be physically fit, taking part in something that is healthy and liberating, is somehow sinful.

Girls are the most vulnerable to domestic and sexual abuse, child marriage, and exploitation. Bangladeshi girls and women have limited scope for their voices to be heard. Most are not aware of their rights and where to find information and support.



Improving Girls' Confidence, Safety and Leadership through Sports and Physical Activities

Sports should be an educational asset for both boys and girls. Over the past few decades all over the world, girls and women's involvement in physical activity has dramatically increased although in Bangladesh, other than an emerging trend among the elite, it remains the same.

Children learn about leadership, teamwork and discipline from the playground environment. They become more creative by participating in different kinds of games. These attributes are most likely to last all through adulthood. Outdoor games provide children an opportunity to spend their extra energy in a healthy way.

In Bangladesh, involvement in sports and physical activities has always been associated with males. Research reveals that sports can influence physical health, psychological well being and overall social and educational development of a child. Absence of physical activity can have negative psychologically impacts on a child. A healthy body leads to a healthy mind.

Physical activity benefits girls in the following ways: -

- Increases metabolism, physical fitness and assists in building a healthy peer group.
- Improves motivation, goal setting, punctuality, healthy competition, tolerance and personal sense of achievement.
- Reducing the risk of obesity and hyperlipidemia (i.e., high levels of fat in the blood).
- Reducing the risk for osteoporosis in adulthood by increasing peak bone mass.
- Enhancing mental health, by improving self-confidence, body image issues, self esteem, tangible experiences of competency and success.
- Enhancing moods and decreasing anxiety by reducing the symptoms of stress and depression among girls.
- Helps girls to socialize and improve their skills while also having fun.

PHREB's Sports Initiative for Girls aims to empower adolescent girls to articulate, demand and access their human rights by improving their own confidence, safety and leadership through engaging them in sports and physical activities at schools and within their community.

What We Do:

- Partnership with schools: PHREB motivates students and teachers within primary schools and high schools to promote a school environment which creates opportunities for girls to play sports at school.
- Working with the community: PHREB motivates community gatekeepers and parents so that they become supporters of girls' sports in their own community and encourage girls to participate in school and in the community.
- Lobby and Advocacy: BKAF (Adolescent Girls Alliance) members are active in lobbying with the local and national government to make sports a regular activity in schools by demanding regular sports events and sports teachers and requesting support for women's national teams.
- PHREB organizes regular inter-school sports competition and encourages schools to do the same.

PHREB spoke to girls about sports and this is what some of them said -



“I want to play because I want to enjoy freedom like boys and I believe sports will give me freedom.”

“Girls have the same rights as boys. They have the right to become physically strong and united.”

“Sports at school will increase the number of girls coming to school. It will increase the girls’ school curriculum and girls’ participation in extracurricular activities.”

“Sport develops self-esteem, self resilience and develops your body and mind to become a change maker.”

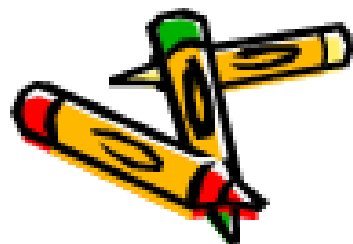


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