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# Designing Programmes for Girls and Young Women



*Sustainable programmes must be led by people who understand and address the key challenges facing girls and their families. Challenges girls face are different from challenges affecting boys. Girls face gender-specific and institutionalized barriers to participation in sport and have unique motivations and expectations for their sporting experience.*

*Programmes that serve girls most effectively are those that emphasize girls' wellness over winning. Sport is inherently a competitive space. Girls can benefit greatly from learning how to compete, how to win and how to lose. However...a successful sport programme should strengthen girls on and off of the field; growth and development of an adolescent girl is always more important than winning or losing.*

**'Women Win—International Guide to Designing Sport Programmes for Girls'**

## TIPS FOR PROGRAMME DESIGNERS

### Inclusion

- The organisation of floorball groups and programmes should include women in key roles, such as coaching and as mentors
- Grassroots ownership of programmes is important both to meeting the specific needs of particular communities of girls and women, and to the sustainability of the programme
- Strategies for change need to be targeted at specific groups of girls and women and significant others, such as fathers, husbands and sons
- Programmes should reflect local cultural needs if they are to engage and sustain girls participation

### One size does not fit all

- It is crucial to be sensitive to the specific circumstances of girls and women, individually and collectively, and to tailor programmes to meet their particular needs – one size does not fit all.
- Traditional programmes often take a 'one size fits all' approach and in so doing fail to achieve any of the outcomes. Such programmes often cater only for a minority of already sport-competent children, the majority of whom are typically boys.
- Failure to recognise this key point may explain why so many initiatives in the past have been ineffective in bringing about real and sustainable change



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## Use existing resources & facilities

- Partnerships between schools and sporting clubs can maximise shared facility use to better enable sports to service local needs. School facilities have been traditionally under-utilised in the after school and weekend time slots. Greater community sport use of school facilities in these timeslots will produce economic efficiencies in terms of facility maintenance, repair and upgrade

## Actions

- Identify clear objectives and take small steps that will cumulatively lead to significant change
- Start small. Find positive examples and build on them
- Be creative. Keep in mind that there is no one way to deliver the programme. You should implement it in a way that makes sense for your programme
- Be persistent and committed – change takes time
- Be bold – take a risk

## Objectives

- Focus on cooperation not competition. Although the competitive aspect of sports can be valuable, design sessions that make all girls feel included and comfortable to participate. When there is a heavy focus on competition, girls who have less experience with physical activity may feel discouraged
- Sometimes it may be more beneficial to offer single-sex programmes, and on other occasions and in other circumstances to offer co-educational programmes
- Develop female athletes and coaches at the same time

## KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMMES

### Make it fun

- 'Fun' is the number one reason why girls and women participate in physical activity and sport. It should be a fun and positive experience with limited, or no, skill or fitness-oriented prerequisites

### Mix Physical & Social Activities

- Girls and young women like to know there will be more than one activity offered - try a multi-activity approach to offer experiences outside the traditional realm of floorball
- Take into consideration the facilities you have access to and be creative



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## Allow input into the programme design

- Girls and young women are not all the same—what works for one age group in one community may not work with another age group or community. Ask participants what they want to do and involve them in the programme design

## Girls & young women only

- Research and experience strongly advocates female-only programming
- Girls and young women need an opportunity to participate in physical activity in their own way. Often the presence of males changes how girls and young women participate and therefore alters their experience

## Provide a safe & supportive environment

- This is crucial, especially to those girls and young women with low participation rates, because they may:
  - lack skills
  - lack positive experiences with physical activity and sport
  - lack self-confidence with respect to participating in physical activity/sport
  - have to deal with cultural, transportation or safety barriers
  - dislike competition
  - be self-conscious about their bodies
- Use this safe environment to provide participants with an experience where:
  - it is ok to make mistakes
  - they are accepted for who they are
  - they know there is someone there to support and encourage them

## Peer age groupings

- Girls and young women like to be with their peers and programmes that offer too broad an age range face the challenge of trying to meet needs that are very diverse
- Use older participants as volunteers/leaders for the younger-aged programmes, to provide leadership opportunities and positive role models

## Basic Skill learning

- Instruction on the basics will allow participants to develop skills, leading to greater confidence, while participating in many different activities
- Girls and young women like playing games they can participate in fully and without competition - try modified rules and equipment, and remember to focus on fun rather than a score
- As confidence and skill level build, some girls and young women may want to increase the competitiveness of the programme – ensure that you provide stepping stones for further participation



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## Role Model Leader

- It is important to place a high value on the quality of the leader chosen to lead the programme. Leaders should, preferably, be female, enthusiastic, positive, encouraging and accepting
- Provide programme leaders with appropriate training

## Nutrition

- Take advantage of opportunities to talk about nutrition, healthy eating, self-esteem and body image

## Clothing & Music

- Girls and young women are often self-conscious about their bodies and can suffer from a negative body image – be flexible with what clothing they can wear. As they become more comfortable, they will begin to dress more appropriately to increase their ease of participating
- Music adds to creating an appealing environment and reduces tension levels

## Skills Passport

- Introduce a Skills Passport – it can include different skills with different levels – 1, 2 or 3 stars
- This is a way of rewarding effort, as well as achievement

For more detailed information you can download the  
*International Guide to Designing Sport Programmes for Girls*  
from <http://guide.womenwin.org/>