



# CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE-BUILDING

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION, PEACE-BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT

Peace is a fundamental human aspiration and a primary goal of the global development community. Peace-building is an essential pre-condition for individual well-being, community development and national advancement. If global development goals are to be reached, concerted efforts to prevent conflict and reduce violence at the individual and community levels are needed.

## RIGHT TO PLAY'S APPROACH

Right To Play's innovative methodology is founded on a unique understanding of social learning theory and child development needs. Our sport and play programs are designed to foster positive behavior change in children and youth by enhancing their ability to prevent and resolve conflict in their lives. Not only do we intervene in conflict and post-conflict settings, but we also address the causes of structural violence by working with at-risk communities. By involving vulnerable children and youth in constructive sport and play programs at a critical stage, our work helps to fill a void in their lives, thus reducing the likelihood that they will engage in delinquent behavior and violence.

In December 2008, the United Nations General Assembly invited international partners ... to collaborate to promote awareness and action to foster peace and accelerate the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals through sport-based initiatives.  
– *UNGA Resolution 63/135*

Although sport alone cannot prevent conflict or build peace, sport programs that emphasize the best values of sport — i.e., fair play, teamwork, respect for one's opponent, and adherence to mutually agreed upon rules — can contribute to broader peace-building efforts. When implemented effectively by well-trained coaches, sport can help to bridge relationships across social, economic and cultural divides and can create a shared identity amongst groups that would otherwise risk being in conflict. By sharing sport

experiences, participants from opposing groups grow to feel that they are increasingly alike, rather than different. Sport can also provide a constructive venue for peaceful dialogue and can help to build resiliency amongst child refugees and victims of war.

## RIGHT TO PLAY'S RESOURCES

Right To Play's programmatic approach involves the application of specially-designed resources. These resources are comprised of sport-based games that promote social interaction and integration. Our games emphasize the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as girls, children and youth with disabilities, ex-child combatants, migrants and internally displaced persons, because these groups are often the most exploited, abused, and stigmatized during



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**Right To Play's vision is to create a healthier and safer world through the power of sport and play**

conflict, and in refugee and post-conflict settings.

Right To Play's resources, such as **Team Up®** and **Youth As Leader®**, have been developed with input from peace education and child development experts. The activities these resources contain promote social integration and cohesion amongst communities at-risk, facilitate non-violent methods for conflict resolution, and address the unique vulnerability of children who risk being in conflict. All of our activities are implemented by local coaches and teachers who are carefully selected and thoughtfully trained. Participants learn constructive communications, teamwork and cooperation skills that help them to confront, reduce and prevent conflict in their own lives.

"Despite entrenched attitudes and lack of collaboration between some groups, there is evidence that sport and play are being used to break down barriers and stimulate dialogue and cooperation... Tamil and Sinhalese children now not only play together in Right To Play sessions, but also initiate play together outside of sessions. Children even call each other *brother* or *sister*, as is the local custom for addressing good friends." – *Right To Play Program Manager, Field Trip Notes, Udahoragala, Sri Lanka, October 2008*

The Reflect-Connect-Apply methodology employed in all of our program resources provides children with the opportunity to discuss their experiences and to connect with others over shared challenges. In school and local settings, children gain the self-esteem and courage needed to act as positive agents of change within their communities. In refugee settings, our activities help to reduce stress, anxiety and depression and provide participants with respite from their difficult surroundings. Children gain access to positive stimulation which contributes to their resiliency and helps them to regain a sense of normalcy in their lives.

## RIGHT TO PLAY'S IMPACT

Right To Play is actively working with refugees and internally displaced persons in 12 countries. Feedback from evaluations conducted on Right To Play's programming in at-risk countries such as Azerbaijan, Benin, Mali, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and the West Bank demonstrate that our approach to peace-building is contributing to conflict reduction at the community level while increasing individual abilities to resolve conflict cooperatively. An evaluation of a UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) program in Palestine also found that schools implementing Right To Play curriculum incurred fewer incidents of violence amongst their students.

## WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Because the roots of conflict are deeply entrenched, Right To Play works to mobilize the interest and support of entire communities. We use the convening power of sport to rally community interest. Events such as the Global Peace Games, special tournaments and friendly competitions bring opposing groups together in the spirit of non-violence, mutual respect and collaboration.

## WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Effective peace-building interventions require programmatic and policy-based approaches. As peace-building advocates, Right To Play works to engage parents, gatekeepers, community leaders and governments in peace-keeping dialogue and initiatives. To implement our activities, we proudly work with local and national partners, including national Ministries of Education, various municipal authorities, and other charitable bodies, as well as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

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