

DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

The United Nations estimates that 500-650 million people worldwide, including 120-150 million children, live with a disability. In many parts of the world, people with disabilities are stigmatized and vulnerable to abuse. Many lack access to basic social services and face limited opportunities for education and employment. As a result of this marginalization, people with disabilities are often prevented from achieving their full potential and many live in extreme poverty. This is especially true in the developing world where approximately 80% of the world's people with disabilities reside. If long lasting solutions to our complex global challenges are to be found, strategies to stimulate the health, well-being and empowerment of persons with disabilities must be considered.

RIGHT TO PLAY'S APPROACH

Right To Play's programming is rooted in the recognition that inclusive and accessible sport and play programs can improve the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of persons with disabilities. Our programs aim to change how communities perceive people with disabilities, and to change what people with disabilities think and feel about themselves.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, which entered into force in 2008, is the leading international framework addressing the rights of persons with disabilities. **Article 30** of the Convention, outlines the rights of all persons with disabilities – including children – to participate equally in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport.

At an individual level, well-designed sport programs can have profound and positive effects. Persons with disabilities are often excluded from community life from a young age. Sport programs can contribute to socialization and can help children with disabilities to acquire social skills that they might otherwise not have the opportunity to develop. Effective sport and play programs provide children with disabilities with opportunities to create social networks, forge friendships with peers, gain life skills and take on leadership roles – all of which contribute to greater independence and self-reliance.



Participation in well-designed sport programs can also improve the physical capacities of persons with disabilities (e.g., coordination, posture, muscle tone and balance) and can contribute to enhanced mobility.

For many young people with disabilities, the gradual acquisition of physical and social skills gained through our programming can help to build the self-confidence, motivation and resiliency needed to take on other life challenges, such as pursuing education and employment.

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

Right To Play's approach to sport and play contribute to improving community perceptions about persons with disabilities. By seeing children with disabilities participate in sport and play activities alongside children without disabilities and accomplish goals previously believed to be unachievable – community members begin to recognize and respect the abilities of children with disabilities. This experience reduces the social stigma associated with disability, which in turn helps to reshape the way entire communities approach disability issues.

RIGHT TO PLAY'S RESOURCES

Right To Play's programmatic approach involves the application of our specially-designed resources. These resources are made up of sport-based games and activities that support the holistic and healthy development of children and youth. All of Right To Play's games and activities aim to create fun and joyful experiences for all participants - regardless of skill level and ability. Our programs are implemented by community members that are carefully selected and thoughtfully trained to be coaches and mentors. Through their training, they learn how to adapt games and activities to ensure the participation and inclusion of all.

At Right To Play, we believe that the best way to lead is by example. That is why we have developed a new and innovative training program to help coaches and leaders adopt inclusive practices in all that they do. This training program, **Abilities First®**, provides leaders with opportunities to closely examine their personal attitudes and to identify the myths and misconceptions about persons with disabilities that lead to stigma and discrimination. By learning about, and participating in, inclusive activities and games, leaders learn to provide accurate and clear modeling to children and youth about how to promote respectful inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Abilities First® also focuses on reducing disability-related stigma and discrimination at the community level. Through games and discussions, leaders learn how to teach children and youth about the negative impact of stigma and discrimination, where stigma comes from, and what they can do to fight stigma in their communities.

“When we started the **Abilities First** training and were told the program would take three days, I thought “what could we possibly have to talk about for three full days in regards to disability?” When we finished, I have been left believing that this is a topic that we could spend months on.”

- Training participant,
Abilities First, Sri Lanka

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Inclusion of children with disabilities is everyone's responsibility. This is why our approach to disability awareness and sensitization goes beyond individual capacity-building to also include collaboration with parents, communities, governments and partner organizations. We are proud to work with local and national partners to implement our programs and, where appropriate, our leaders and coaches refer children to other organizations that can provide specialized support.

To raise international awareness about disability issues, we work with national and international partners, such as the International Paralympic Committee. Our work is also supported by an international team of athlete ambassadors, many of whom are accomplished Paralympians. These ambassadors act as positive role models for our beneficiaries and help to mobilize support for our work.

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