



HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION

HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Infectious diseases are a major cause of death, disability and social and economic upheaval worldwide. Over 26,000 children under the age of five die every day, mainly from preventable causes. Although diseases such as HIV and AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, measles and diarrheal diseases are largely preventable and, in most cases, treatable, they are key contributors to the 9.7 million child deaths every year (2005). Risks associated with infectious diseases in the developing world are exacerbated by systemic poverty which limits individual and community access to healthcare and health-related information. With these obstacles left unresolved, the full benefits of global development efforts cannot be realized.

“Physical activity is for an individual a strong means for prevention of diseases and for nations a cost-effective method to improve public health across the population.”
– WHO, *Health and Development through Physical Activity and Sport*, 2003

RIGHT TO PLAY'S APPROACH

Right To Play's programming is rooted in the recognition that physical activity can positively impact the health and well-being of children and youth. Not only can regular physical activity enhance the health of children and youth by preventing and/or delaying the onset of non-communicable diseases, sport and play can also improve young people's mental, emotional and psycho-social well-being. The universal appeal of sport also makes it an ideal vehicle to inform, educate and empower entire communities to fight communicable disease and promote holistic life-long approaches to health.

Our innovative methodology is founded on a unique understanding of social learning theory and child development needs. Our programs foster the health and well-being of children and youth by equipping them with the skills they need for constructive behaviour change. Our programming is delivered by local coaches who are carefully selected and thoughtfully trained. By using repetition and positive reinforcement, these role models help children and youth to develop new attitudes and adopt healthy lifestyle choices. Children and youth who participate in our programs learn to communicate more effectively and openly with their peers and families, resist peer pressure, and exemplify healthy attitudes towards the principles of respect, inclusion and cooperation.

RIGHT TO PLAY'S RESOURCES

Right To Play's programmatic approach involves the application of specially-designed resources. These resources contain more than 150 sport and play activities for children and youth that specifically address the diverse dimensions of disease prevention



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

and promote the values of a healthy lifestyle.

Activities outlined in our **Red Ball Child Play**® and **Health Games**® resources teach children about infectious diseases such as malaria, TB, measles, and diarrheal diseases. Many of the sport and play activities contained in these resources have been adapted from local traditional games. Activities promote basic hygiene and good nutrition and provide strategies to avoid and treat illness and disease, by incorporating key messages such as: “wash your hands to limit the spread of bacteria”; “tuberculosis spreads through the air”; and “protect yourself against mosquitoes”.

“I like the game *Malaria Area*. When you are tagged with a bean bag, it means a mosquito has bitten you and you will fall ill. This game taught me that if we clear our compounds and keep them neat, as well as sleep under a treated mosquito net, we will not be bitten by mosquitoes, and will not get malaria.” – 8 year-old girl, Ghana, Africa

Our **Live Safe Play Safe**® resource is an innovative HIV and AIDS prevention and education tool that is currently being implemented by locally trained coaches and teachers in 14 at-risk countries. By participating in **Live Safe Play Safe**® activities, children and youth learn about HIV and AIDS transmission and prevention, while gaining knowledge to reduce vulnerability and adopt risk reduction behaviours.

Children and youth who participate in our health-based activities learn valuable life skills that steer them on a lifelong path to good health. Not only does our approach promote physical health and well-being over the long term, but children and youth who participate in our programs also learn to manage risks associated with contracting infectious diseases.

“Formerly children were not allowed to talk to their parents about HIV and sex...but now it is changing: our children talk to us about what they are learning...and now we find it easier to talk to them about sexuality and how to take care of themselves.” – Parent, Sierra Leone

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Right to Play uses the convening power of sport to mobilize community support for health promotion and disease prevention. For example, in Uganda, Right To Play joined forces with UNICEF and the Ministry of Health in coordinating an immunization campaign. Through the use of sport and play activities at health clinics, more than three times the normal number of children were immunized against measles. Community involvement is also stimulated through a wide range of sport-based initiatives, including Play Days, commemorative days (e.g. World AIDS Days), sports galas, leagues, tournaments, and friendly competitions. These types of initiatives are all employed to promote the importance of physical activity to health and well-being while communicating key messages about issues central to health promotion and disease prevention at the community level.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Effective health promotion and disease prevention strategies require interventions that involve a variety of stakeholders at the policy, programmatic and activity-based levels – all of which have influence on the lives of children and youth who are affected by, or susceptible to, disease. This is why Right To Play’s approach to health goes beyond individual capacity-building to also include activities to strengthen local and national partnerships and to stimulate the involvement of parents, gatekeepers, community leaders and governments. Right To Play is also proud to work with international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) to implement all of our health activities.

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