

Programme Summary

Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls through Sport and Play, Pakistan

Programme at a glance

The Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls through Sport and Play Programme (2015-2018) worked to prevent school-based violence in Hyderabad, Pakistan. The programme combined sport and play activities with children on the cusp of adolescence, capacity building with education partners, and wider engagements with parents and the community, with the primary goal to reduce violence among and against children. The programme resulted in significant reductions in violence in schools, and children also reported significantly less violence at home. **These findings contribute to the evidence base of how school-based interventions can reduce violence against children (VAC), as well as have an impact on violence against women (VAW).**

Background

Violence against children (VAC) affects over 50% of children globally every year.¹ It is also linked to experiences of and perpetration of violence against women (VAW) later in life.² Therefore efforts to prevent VAC can have an immediate impact in children's lives, as well as influence children's future trajectories, including their risk of experiencing and/or perpetrating VAW later in life. Since 2002, the international non-governmental organisation (NGO) *Right to Play* has worked in schools across Pakistan to challenge the acceptability of violence. The programme was led by Right to Play and evaluated as part of the *What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls* Global Programme.

Programme context

VAC and VAW are widespread in Pakistan. According to Pakistan's 2017-18 Demographic and Health Survey, 28% of women (aged 15-49) had experienced lifetime physical or sexual violence.³

Baseline data from the programme found that:

- 78% of girls and 92% of boys (aged 11-12) had experienced peer violence in school.
- 56% of girls and 78% of boys reported having perpetrated violence.
- 92% of boys and 67% of girls reported experiencing corporal punishment at school, and 62% of boys and 38% of girls reported physical punishment at home.
- Children with disabilities were more likely than children without disabilities to experience these various forms of violence. For instance, children with disabilities were more than twice as likely to experience peer violence as those without a disability.
- Analysis of the data found that corporal punishment in school, physical punishment at home and perpetration of peer violence were associated; suggesting that children experience a vicious cycle of violence.



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Programme description

Right to Play worked in 40 government schools in Hyderabad in Sindh district - 20 girls schools and 20 boys schools - **reaching 8,000 children**. The programme followed a whole-school approach where all children in the selected schools took part in activities. Most children were 11-12 years old when the programme commenced.

The programme **engaged children in a series of structured, play-based learning activities**, which gave children opportunities to develop a range of skills and abilities, aiming to build confidence, empathy, and resilience; improve children's ability to cope with negative emotions and conflicts; and promote gender equality and tolerance.

The intervention also included **community-based events** where children participated in thematic play days (e.g. Dignity Day, Peace Day, Women's Day), thematic sport tournaments (e.g. Stop Violence, Fair Play, Friendship Equality), and summer camps. These events aimed to engage the wider community, especially parents, and raise their awareness about children's rights and gender equality.

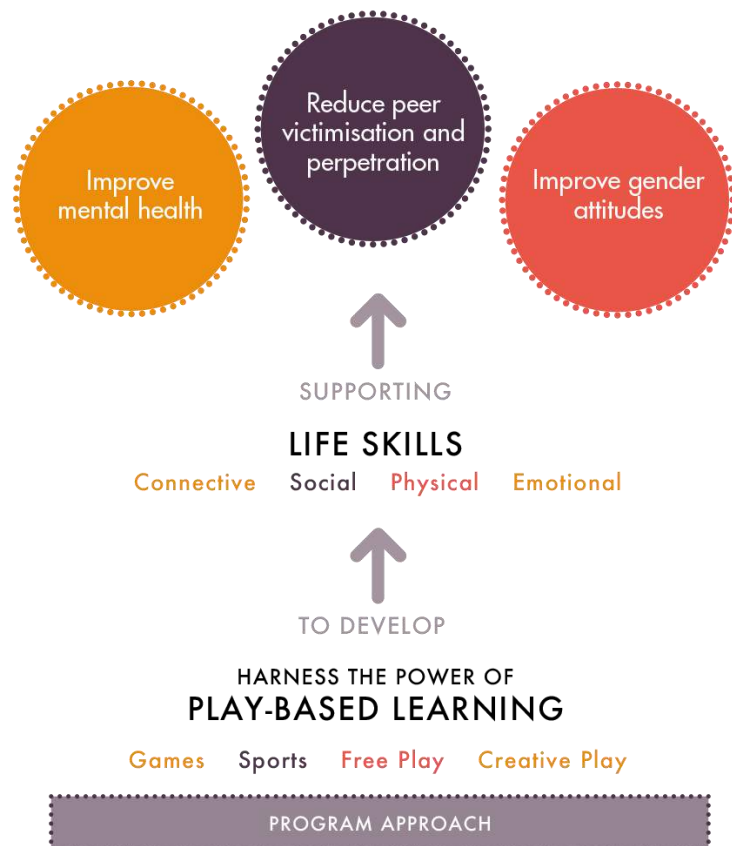
The programme also provided **capacity-building for civil society organisations (CSOs), local and national authorities and government** on how to address VAW and VAC in the education system. For instance, local CSOs working on child and educational development received training in positive child and youth development, and a training on gender responsive education was organised for textbook writers and curriculum developers. **A hundred teachers received specific training** in positive child and youth development, positive disciplining, and gender and child protection, to create a safer school environment for children.

Theory of Change

The Right to Play programme is based on the hypothesis that play and sports-based experiential learning will bring positive attitudinal and behavioural changes among girls and boys that will shift social norms and lead towards reductions in VAC and improve children's mental health.

The programme recognises that **individual behaviour** change is not enough on its own. For changes to be sustained, there also need to be changes in **social relationships** and **institutional changes**.

Thus, the intervention engaged communities and the wider school environment to challenge gender inequality and address VAC and VAW.



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Core components

The programme's activities with children were implemented during two school years. There were also a number of preparatory interventions in advance of this.

Training coaches: Youth from local communities were trained as coaches to lead activities with children in schools. 10 female coaches led activities in girls' schools and 10 male coaches in boys' schools. The coaches were young graduates with previous experience of working with children, and who demonstrated positive attitudes and passion for children's rights and gender equality. A 10-day long training provided training in Right to Play's methodologies for holistic child development. The training also focused on child protection and inclusion and gender equality.

Bringing stakeholders together: An initial meeting was held to introduce the programme to stakeholders, including the District Education Officer and team, head teachers of participating schools, and representatives from local civil society organisations. The participation of head teachers was seen as particularly important to ensure they engaged closely with programme activities in schools.

Delivering games and activities: Each month, the Right to Play team, the school principal, teachers and coaches met to discuss the monthly scheduling of activities. Activities were integrated in the school schedule and were delivered by the coaches, with support from teachers and junior leaders. The programme trained 120 junior leaders (5-6 per school), who were students who showed potential as leaders and to act as role models for their peers.

- **120 sessions** were carried out over two years; 60 per school year.
- Two **40-minute sessions** took place each week; a total of 80 hours.
- The coaches used a **manual with 100 learning activities** to plan and implement sessions which follows Right to Play's methodology for holistic child development. These were sub-divided into different categories of activities designed to address five different themes (see table below).

RED MIND BALL Thinking and intellectual development	BLACK BODY BALL Physical development	YELLOW SPIRIT BALL Feelings and emotional development	BLUE PEACE BALL Relationships and social development	GREEN HEALTH BALL Development of a state of well-being
				
The Red Mind Ball addresses: Awareness Perception Concentration Memory Insight Understanding Learning Numeracy Literacy Knowledge Strategy Organisation	The Black Body Ball addresses: The senses Aerobic capacity Strength Flexibility Coordination Development of healthy lungs, bones, muscles and hearts	The Yellow Spirit Ball addresses: Self-esteem Optimism Fear Hope Security Humour Coping skills Self expression Expression of positive and negative emotions	The Blue Peace Ball addresses: Communication Cooperation Teamwork Leadership Empathy Trust Relationships with peers, family and community	The Green Health Ball addresses: Dangers of drugs and infectious diseases Dealing with aches, pains and strains Importance of physical activity, diet, sleep and healthy environment

Source: Right to play (2007) [Holistic Child Development: Games Manual](#)

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Participatory and experiential learning approaches: The activities are designed to be interactive and invite children to explore different topics through experiencing an activity together and thereafter engaging in a three-step critical reflection process called RCA: *Reflect-Connect-Apply*.

- **Reflect:** Reflect back on the activity and what one experienced.
- **Connect:** Compare and connect what one experienced through the activity with previous life experiences.
- **Apply:** Discuss how one can use or apply the experience in other situations in life.



Age appropriate and adaptable activities: The activities are designed to meet learning outcomes for children of certain age groups, but also instruct coaches to consider the developmental stage of children in each group they work with, as children go through development stages at different rates. The manual includes practical guidance on how activities can be modified in a way that allows all children in a group to participate, including children with disabilities.

Continuous training and mentoring: The coaches were trained for 127 hours before starting their work. They received ongoing supervision by two field facilitators, who observed their work and gave feedback during weekly meetings. Junior leaders were initially trained for 32 hours, received ongoing mentoring and support from coaches and later received a 12-hour refresher training.

Monitoring and evaluation

Programme monitoring was carried out by weekly visits to the participating schools where Right to Play's field facilitators met with the coaches to discuss progress and challenges. Coaches recorded each completed activity on a template, including participant data and outcomes against learning objectives.

The programme was evaluated via a rigorous randomised control trial (RCT). Out of the 40 schools, 20 schools received the intervention while 20 were control schools. After two years of implementation, the RCT observed significant changes in intervention schools compared to control schools:

- **Experiences of peer violence decreased** from 92% to 84% among boys and from 78% to 50% among girls who received the intervention.
- **Peer violence perpetration dropped** from 78% to 73% among boys and from 56% to 37% among girls.

- **Corporal punishment in school decreased** by 45% in boys and 66% in girls, and by 62% in boys and 77% in girls at home.

The RCT also found reductions in depression among girls and boys, and changes in gender attitudes, with children displaying less patriarchal gender attitudes after the intervention.

Notably, the study also observed a significant reduction in children reporting that they had witnessed domestic violence at home. There was a 70% decrease among girls and 65% decrease among boys.

Prior to the intervention, the baseline study found a strong association between children's perpetration of peer violence and witnessing domestic abuse at home: 1 in 7 of the children who had perpetrated peer violence in the past month had witnessed their mother being abused in this period.

P R O G R A M M E S U M M A R Y

Lessons for programming

The Right to Play programme in Pakistan shows that schools can be a powerful platform to prevent multiple forms of violence and transform social norms around violence and gender. Some of the contributing factors to the results and lessons for school-based violence prevention programming are outlined below, drawing on *What Works* evidence.^{4 5}

Allow enough time for the intervention: Longer programme cycles, in this case two years of implementation, enables time for children's experiential learning, critical reflection, and for testing new skills and knowledge over a longer period. It is critical that programmes that work with children allow enough time for learning and for changes in ideas and behaviours to unfold.

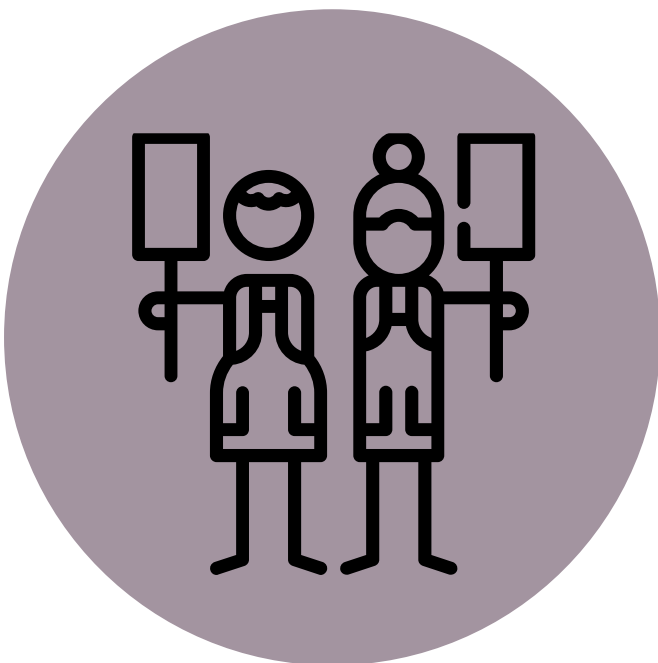
Training and support for those delivering the programme: Field facilitators, coaches and junior leaders all went through in-depth training prior to the programme and received ongoing support. Careful selection of team members, thorough training, and ongoing support have been identified as key ingredients in programmes that seek to prevent VAC.

Activities should be age-appropriate and inclusive:

Age-appropriate interventions are essential when working with children. In this case, activities were entirely sport and play-based, and used an engaging and participatory pedagogy adjusted to children's development stages. The activity manual also includes guidance on how to adapt activities to be inclusive so that all children, including children with disabilities, can participate.

User-friendly, manualised activities: Interventions that have effectively managed to prevent VAC have in common that they have used carefully designed, user-friendly manuals. The manual used in Pakistan included a clear objective for each activity, and step-by-step guidance on how to carry out the activity and facilitate the RCA discussion.

Focus on multiple drivers of violence: The Right to Play intervention addressed multiple drivers of violence, including social norms that underpin violence, and poor communication and lack of conflict-resolution skills. It also worked at multiple levels, with children, schools and communities to challenge and shift norms that perpetuate violence. The result was significant decreases in VAC as well as a significant drop in reports of children witnessing domestic violence at home. This shows the effectiveness of schools as an entry point to prevent both VAC and VAW.



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Source documents

[The Intersection of School Corporal Punishment and Associated Factors: Baseline Results from a Randomized Controlled Trial in Pakistan](#), Khuwaja H. M. A., Karmaliani R., McFarlane, J., Somani R., Gulzar S., Ali T.S., et al., *PLoS ONE* 13(10), 2018

[Preventing Peer Violence against Children: Methods and Baseline Data of a Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial in Pakistan](#), McFarlane J., Karmaliani R., Maqbool Ahmed Khuwaja H. et al., *Global Health: Science and Practice*, 5(1), 2017

[Right to Play: Preventing Violence among and against Children in Schools in Hyderabad, Pakistan, Evidence Brief](#), What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls, 2018

Links to further resources

- An overview of the programme and links to *What Works* resources can be found [here](#)
- [Right to Play: Who we are and What we do](#), What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls, 2018
- [Holistic Child Development: Games Manual](#), Right to play, 2007

Endnotes

¹ McFarlane J., Karmaliani R., Maqbool Ahmed Khuwaja H. et al. (2017) [Preventing peer violence against children: methods and baseline data of a cluster randomized controlled trial in Pakistan](#), *Global Health: Science and Practice*, 2017;5(1), pp. 115-137,

² Ibid; see also Fulu, E. et al (2017) [Pathways between childhood trauma, intimate partner violence, and harsh parenting: findings from the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific](#), *The Lancet Global Health* 2017; 5: e512–22

³ National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) [Pakistan] and ICF (2019) [Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18](#), Islamabad, Pakistan, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: NIPS and ICF

⁴ Jewkes, R., Willan, S., Heise, L., Washington, L., Shai, N., Kerr-Wilson, A, Christofides, N. (2020)

[Effective design and implementation elements in interventions to prevent violence against women and girls](#), What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls? Global Programme Synthesis Product Series

⁵ Jewkes, R. (2019) [How the School Environment, Given Enough Time, Could Offer the Key to Violence Prevention](#), *What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls Blog*, October 14, 2019

This document is part of the RESPECT Framework Implementation Guide, commissioned by UN Women and developed by Social Development Direct, which can be found [here](#).

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