

## Heading

Going for Gold: Using Sports to Promote SRH Education and Gender Equality and Address GBV

## Organisation

EngenderHealth

## Country/ Region

India and Tanzania

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## Key Words

Sports, Gender, Health, Youth, Gender, Leadership

Gender Equality and Gender Equity in and through PEPAS

Integration of Health, including Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Interventions with PEPAS

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and/or Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

## Summary/ Overview

EngenderHealth's Purposeful Play Programme is designed to inform and train participants on issues related to gender equality, sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV). Adolescents discuss topics through purposeful play curriculum. The program operates in India and Tanzania, countries where gendered health, social and power asymmetries persist. The Purposeful Play Programme uses sport to address these issues.

## Problem Statement

EngenderHealth implemented a sports for development (S4D) initiative in India and Tanzania as a pilot intervention in 2022, reaching approximately 6,000 young people through a cascade training program focused on SRH, gender equality, and GBV. In India, violence against children (VAC) and sexual violence are persistent issues for women and girls. Further, only 10% of young women aged 15 to 24 years are able to make independent decisions about their healthcare and 23% of those aged 20 to 24 are married by the age of 18. In Tanzania, only 35% of women participate in decision-making about their healthcare, major household purchases, and family visits. Approximately 40% of Tanzanian women have experienced physical violence and 17% have experienced sexual violence. Further, although marriage of girls under 18 years of age is unconstitutional in Tanzania, an estimated 30% of Tanzanian women are married before turning 18, and more than half before turning 20. These data from both countries highlight the need for comprehensive educational programming for adolescents and children to address gender inequalities and to change gender norms.

## About the Programme

EngenderHealth's meaningful youth participation (MYP) activities have demonstrated the effectiveness of games and sports in engaging adolescents and youth in discussions about sensitive topics such as SRH, gender inequality, and GBV. EngenderHealth co-developed a methodology and curriculum with partners using games and sports to improve understanding critical Sexual and Reproductive Health, gender, gender-based violence (GBV), and violence against children (VAC) issues in Bihar, India, and Dar-es-salaam and Zanzibar, Tanzania. Using the new curriculum, we employed a cascade training method, first training a pool of master trainers at the national level, who then trained a pool of youth trainers in the project implementation states, who then formed groups of 10 to 12 young people to participate in sports for development activities. Through these activities, we successfully disseminated key messages around SRH and gender issues to young people at the community level. We ensured sustainability by integrating these interventions into existing government programs where young people were already serving as peer educators and champions. By engaging these particular young people, we were able quickly mobilize activities and leverage their networks. In India, we leveraged our long-standing Tarunya adolescent health and development program to implement this initiative. In Tanzania, we integrated this work into our Scaling Up Family Planning project, reaching youth, health and sports teachers, and community health workers. In total, across the two countries, this initiative reached approximately 6,000 youth.

## Challenges

1. Empowering trainers: Survivors of GBV and VAC may feel overwhelmed and seek support from facilitators during activities and discussions focused on these topics. Trainers must undergo thorough training and sensitization on these sensitive topics, including training on providing initial counselling and referral procedures, to be able to provide appropriate support to survivors when this occurs.
2. Maintaining message clarity: Trainers sometimes experienced challenges ensuring that the intended messages about SRH and gender were not lost in the spirit of the games. They addressed this by facilitating small discussions after games to reinforce the key messages.
3. Risk of injury: Sports and games inherently carry the risk of injury. To mitigate this risk, we provided first aid facilities and identified areas that would be safe for physical activities to conduct the games.

## Successes

EngenderHealth's sports-for-development initiative effectively advanced SRH and promoted gender equality while engaging youth in meaningful ways.

1. Increased youth engagement: The sports-for-development methodology made young people feel comfortable engaging in open conversations about these often sensitive and stigmatized topics. The community was widely accepting of this approach, as it was natural to see young people playing and being active, which further supported youth's ability to engage in the initiative.
2. Enhanced skills and confidence: This initiative also significantly improved the awareness levels and facilitation skills of youth and adolescents regarding SRH and gender issues. Further, the initiative not only contributed to their physical fitness and mental well-being but also boosted their confidence.

3. Increased female participation in sports: Whereas girls have traditionally been less likely to participate in sports than boys, this initiative also shifted this social norm by increasing the participation of girls in sports. Further, implementing this initiative within the framework of broader health projects encouraged community acceptance for girls' participation.

### Lessons

- Integrating sports for development to address SRH, GBV, and VAC issues can benefit youth and adults and engaging in physical games and sports enhances physical and mental health.
- Integrating sports-for-development activities within school curricula and training teachers to facilitate sessions can support scale and sustainability for in-school youth.
- Games can serve as effective entry points for initiating discussions on sensitive topics, like SRH and gender, in ways that promote youth participation and mitigate community backlash; this is especially important for engaging girls and young women. However, the sports-for-development approach must include clarification sessions to ensure the achievement of the educational outcomes—the games must be coupled with and supported by accurate information and relevant data.
- A clear strategy for monitoring and evaluating the intervention's effectiveness is essential.
- Identifying opportunities for integrating additional health topics and games through intersectionality and vulnerability lens is crucial.

### Additional Resources

[download as Pdf] In partnership with EngenderHealth, Coaches Across Continents (CAC) has developed this resource to provide community leaders in diverse contexts with tools to address gender-related issues through play, specially around sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender-based violence (GBV). Curriculum: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S3MZ0d4ITLDIMpljol89L2GrxrYY0xiH/view>

Video [include on page]:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tD08S9VyPaoMLO2xhEcSX\\_SU\\_50tIDFB/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tD08S9VyPaoMLO2xhEcSX_SU_50tIDFB/view)

Summary: The video showcases the experiences of the master trainers and peer educators who implemented the sports-for-development initiative in India and how they envision the future of this initiative.

Title: Go for Gold: Sports for a Purpose!

List of participants:

- Master trainers trained on sports-for-development
- Youth from India project trained on the sports for development curriculum
- EngenderHealth representatives

Main topic: Implementation of EngenderHealth's sports-for-development initiative

### References

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