

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Children in Sports

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Children love to play

- Through play children learn:

social and physical skills

tolerance

discipline and respect for others

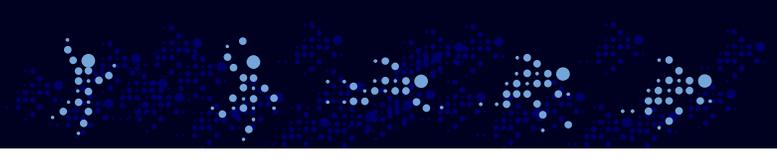


Sport participation is important in relation to children's health and well-being

- Reduces
 - Childhood obesity
 - Cardiac disease
 - Type 2 diabetes
- Promotes gender equity, and religious and cultural tolerance
- May lead to crime reduction
- Increases young people's self esteem
- Reduces teenage pregnancy



- Sport is not immune from the problems of child abuse that we find in other social settings



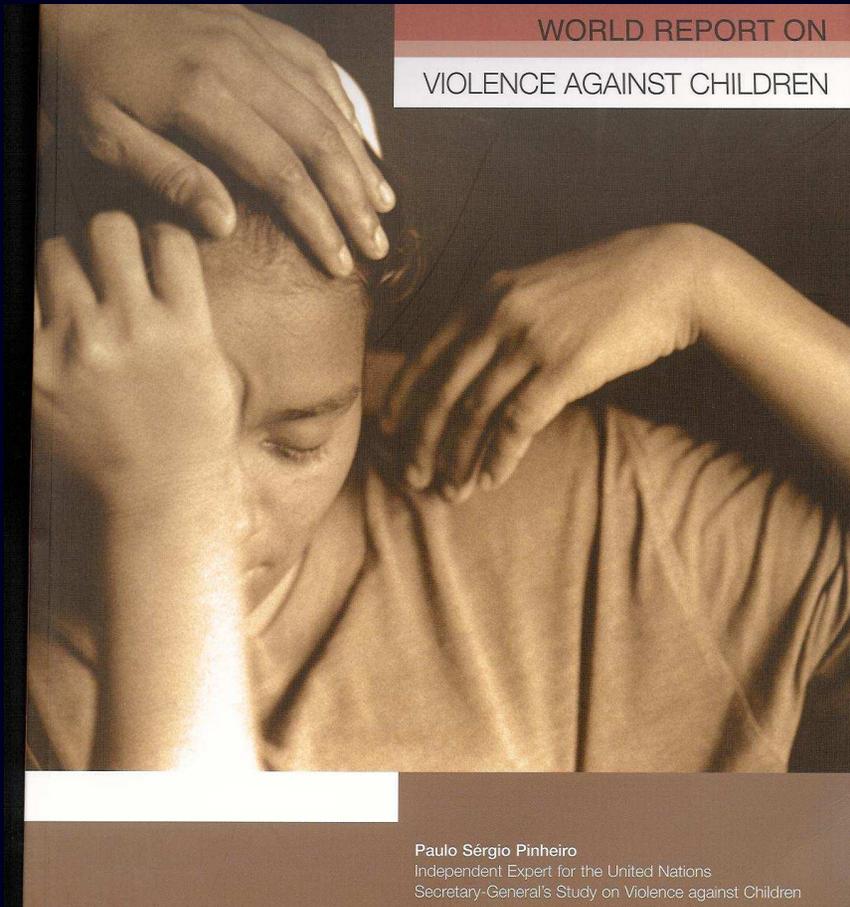
Preventing global violence to children in sport: Research from UNICEF



Co-researchers:

- Celia Brackenridge (England)
- Sandra Kirby (Canada)
- Trisha Leahy (Hong Kong)
- Sylvie Parent (Canada)
- Trond Svela Sand (Norway)
- + an international expert panel

The UN Secretary General's study 2006

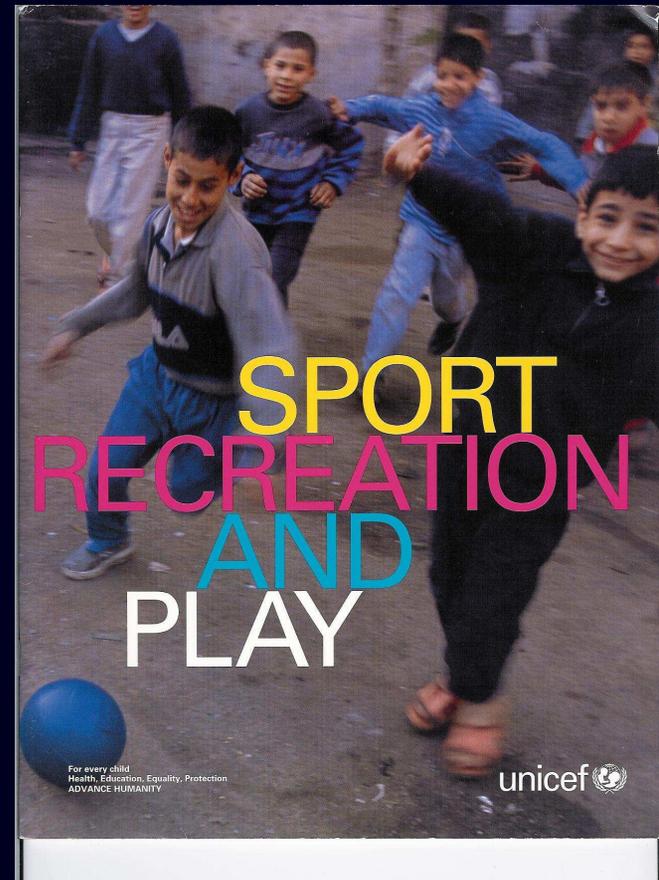


- “... first comprehensive global attempt to describe the scale of all forms of violence against children and its impact” (p. xiii)
- “... no violence against girls or boys is justifiable ... all violence against them is preventable.” (p. xv)

The place of sport in UNICEF's work

- Sport is especially powerful for realising the Millennium Development Goals
- This booklet is seen as an advocacy tool for sport-for-development
- BUT ...sport is barely visible in the Global Study
- AND ...child protection is not in evidence in sport schemes

- 2 major functions:
- Fund-raising
- Sport for development



Current sport-related research violence against children



IRC Working Paper:

The production of a working paper based on a secondary analysis of the 1000 documents collected for the Global Study of Violence Towards Children (Pinheiro 2006) to extract sport-related information and to identify research and policy gaps (227 documents and 119 government/country survey returns)

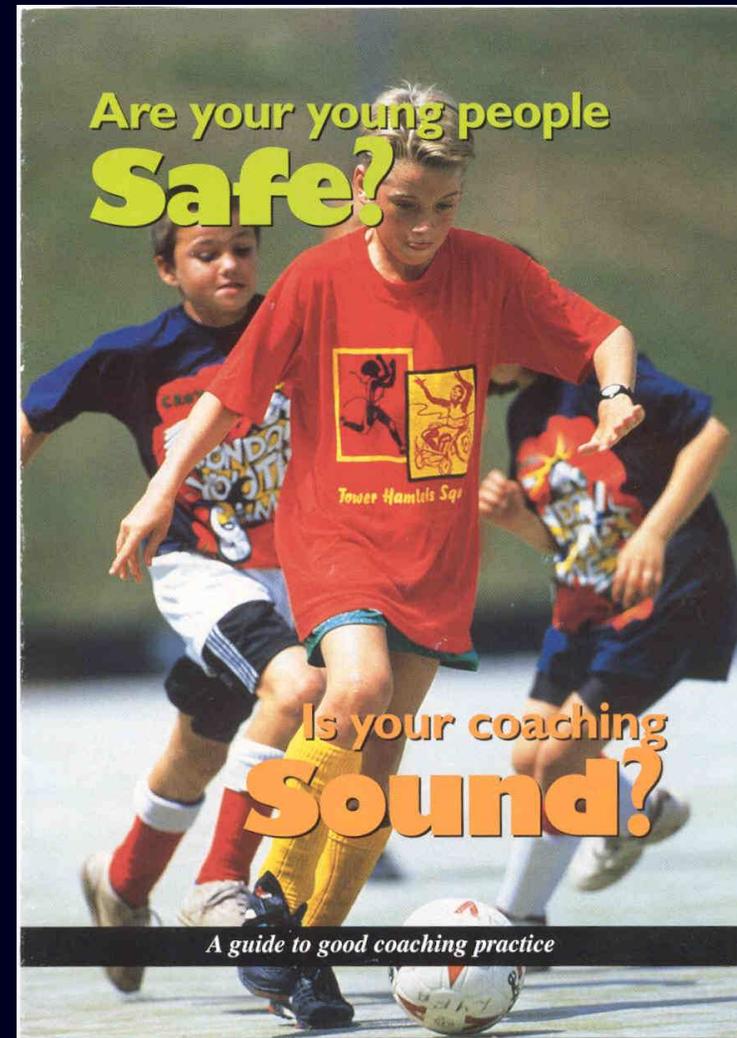
IRC Digest:

The production of a systematic review of evidence about violence to children in sport and violence prevention measures, to identify knowledge, policy and geographic gaps.



Working Paper: Findings

- **Low awareness:** Violence against children in sport is below the government radar of most countries. Very few documents mentioned sport
- **Poor communication:** The countries that have done the most to develop anti-violence research, policy and practice in sport (Australia, Canada, Norway, the Netherlands and UK) scored very poorly on the scans



Content Analysis of the hits on sport (Violence study)

- Exercise is used as punishment; Example Fiidj: " Boys between 14-17 –were given exercise-related punishments such as 'running around the ground' 'press-ups' and 'sit-ups
- Children are deprived time to rest, to recreation and play, particular girls, for example Girl Child Labour (New Dehli), Child domestic workers in Addis Ababa: "Recreation and play for most are non-existent
- Abuse: "In India a Physical Education teacher molested a 13-year- old Dalit girl"



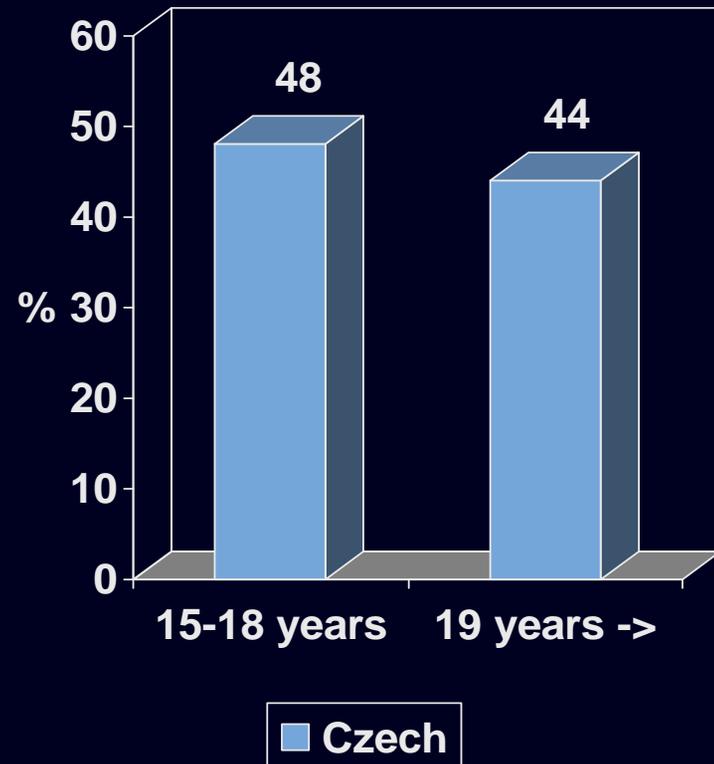
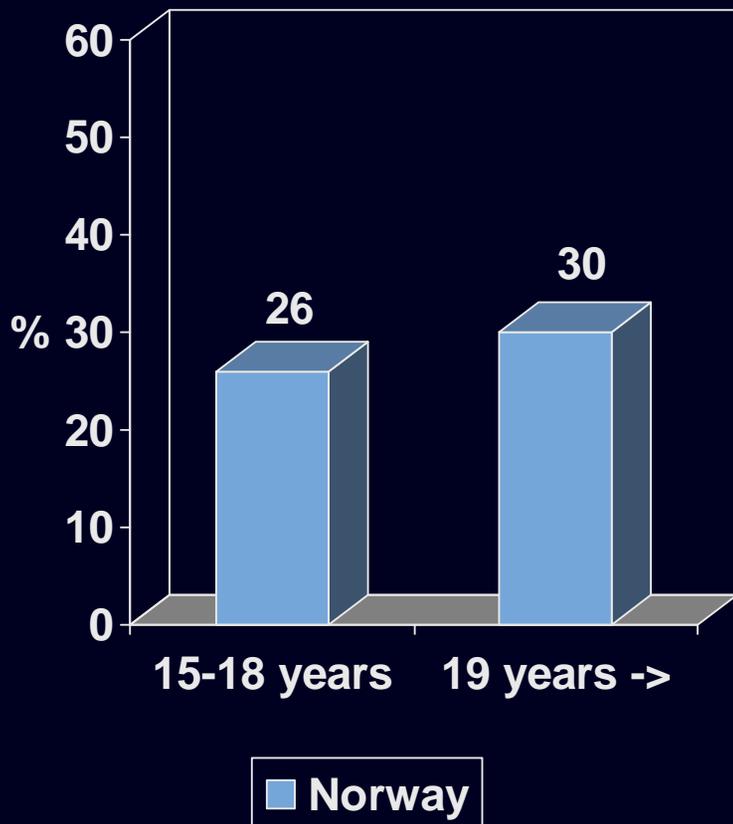
Digest: Findings

Evidence found of:

- **Discrimination and harassment on the basis of sex, race or sexual orientation**
- **Sexual violence ('groomed' or forced sex/rape; use of pornography; sexual degradation; sexualised initiations, bullying and hazing)**
- **Physical maltreatment**
- **Overtraining**
- **Playing while injured**
- **Peer aggression**
- **Parental maltreatment**
- **Doping/drug abuse**
- **Alcohol abuse**
- **Emotional and psychological abuse**
- **Neglect**
- **Child labour and trafficking**



Experienced sexual harassment inside sport among young female athletes in Norway and Czech Republic (Fasting et al 2007)



Evidence of sexual abuse in sport

- One quantitative study among 250 Danish sport students found that about 25% either knew about or had themselves experienced situations where a sport participant under the age of 18 had been sexually harassed by a coach. 3% of coaches reported having sexual relationships with under-age athletes.
- Further, 3.2 % of Canadian athletes reported that, when less than 16 years of age, they had been upset by a 'flasher' in a sporting context and 2.6 % that they had experienced unwanted sexual touching prior to the age of 16 years.
- Related data from Australia indicate that rates of sexual violence against children in sport may be as high as 8%.



What child athletes say about sexual violence

- *From 12-16 years of age) ... when we didn't perform well, then the punishment was that we should sit on his lap. I remember I thought it was disgusting. He touched us and was really very disgusting. I don't understand today why we accepted it at all. We had a drill where we had to sprint, and the one who came last had to sit on his lap, so everyone was running like hell. (Norwegian elite female athlete)*
- *At 15 in the hockey world, it's a tough thing to do, to say a man has touched your or made sexual moves on you. You don't want to wreck your dreams (Sheldon Kennedy, Canadian professional ice hockey player)*
- *He did rape me but I didn't know it was happening. [his] partner is trapped in that marriage ... he was with her from thirteen...I was infatuated with him... I was under age. I was fifteen (English female athlete)*

Evidence of sexual exploitation of children in sport

- As with sexual violence in other social spheres, individual characteristics such as age and elite status have been identified as possible risk factors, with talented athletes at or around puberty but prior to achieving elite status – the ‘stage of imminent achievement’ is hypothesised to be more vulnerable to sexual abuse by an authority figure.
- Systemic risk factors, such as the normalization of psychologically abusive coaching practices and the often-unregulated power of authority figures to be able to isolate aspiring young athletes, have also been documented



Initiatives to assist victims

- In the UK, there is a generic sport helpline and there are sport-specific helplines for swimming and football.
- The Netherlands has also operated a sport helpline through which anyone with concerns, including perpetrators and victimised athletes may access face-to-face counselling support.
- In Canada, following the revelations of sexual abuse to boys in junior ice hockey, the 'Speak Out!' campaign by Hockey Canada encouraged young victims to report concerns about their own and others' experiences of violence. The Red Cross of Canada has a 24-hour helpline linked to the 'Respect in Sport' Campaign.



Prevention

- In the UK, a dedicated Child Protection in Sport Unit was established in 2001 that offers comprehensive policy and practice advice to sport bodies. The Unit has grown each year and now works in collaboration with partners not only across the UK but also in other countries. It gives advice, helps sports to monitor and resolve cases and promotes good practice in coaching and teaching of youth sports.
- In Canada, several sport agencies have promoted ethical practice in children's sport. These include the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the Coaching Association of Canada, both of whom have a long tradition of embedding athlete welfare in sport practice.
- In Australia, mainly through the aegis of the Australian Sports Commission's Ethics Programme, a large number of individual initiatives has been introduced focussing on good behaviour and violence prevention in youth sports.
- The Netherlands has used a combination of research, policy development and promotional campaigns to combat sexual abuse in sport.
- There is, as yet, no coordinated international effort in this field. The *Digest* aims to promote such cooperation.



There are large gaps in the knowledge base on this subject, in particular in relation to:

- Geography – we know little about Africa, Asia, South America, Central and Eastern Europe on this theme

Tanzania: *“... sport was a distrusted institution for girls and women due to sexual harassment suspicions. This situation is said to be the reason that many parents and husbands do not allow their daughters or wives to participate in sport.”* (Massao 2001)



There are large gaps in the knowledge base on this subject, in particular in relation to:

- Types of violence – neglect, physical and psychological abuse, trafficking and exploitation in sport are under-researched
- Education programmes – there is a lack of provision for several key stakeholder groups including athletes, policy makers, support personnel, officials and sport managers
- The child athlete's voice – is still largely unheard



Short term impacts

- Intense interest from the UN and UNICEF community
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has set up working group on children in sport



Long term potential

- Closer cooperation between the child protection and sport-for-development communities
- More research to address knowledge gaps
- Sharing of models of good practice in policy, ethics, structures and systems, education, etc.

