



## MICROPROJECT SEXUAL HEALTH

NOV 2012

Girls and Football SA hit the fields at Lynedoch Primary School, near Cape Town in the Western Cape.

Throughout the workshops, our focus was in part conducting research for new material to include in our programming. As such, we placed an emphasis on setting time aside to listen to the individual voices of the girls we've been working with.

All this focus on expressing yourself can lead to a lot of commotion! Throughout the various activities we did with the participants, we noticed that certain exercises led to major excitement. During one activity, the girls were encouraged to loudly share concepts and ideas that came to their mind regarding a particular topic, such as football. In an alternate version of the same activity, the participants were encouraged to share their opinion in a respectful way, to listen to others, and to strive to reach mutual benefits. It quickly became apparent which method made it easier to communicate. Our focus was placed on stimulating the participants to share their opinions and thoughts in a productive way.

We also focused on the importance of being a good listener. By showing the girls that the sooner they focused on learning an activity, or the more actively they participated during discussion on sensitive topics, the sooner they'd be able to play a game. By showing them the importance of being a good listener, we instilled a level of trust, which allowed us to include sensitive information on issues such as Sexual Health and Self Esteem.

We approached the importance of dealing with an issue up front, rather than letting it reflect in a destructive way in the work or play space. Finally, we encouraged girls to show and share. This includes contributing to the group in a positive way by sharing skills, and encouraging teamwork. Girls who showed interest, respect and skills were given extra responsibilities; they were elected team captain during a game.

Naturally our workshops aren't always a smooth ride! In fact, one of the main issues that has started to surface is the way that the girls were treating each other. Bullying is often a very common problem in teenage years, and we wanted to show our participants that hurtful behavior has a consequence. As a result, we introduced a new activity which included yellow and red cards (just like in real football games!). The girls were impressed that they were being treated as professional players, and their attitudes soon took a professional spin. To add a Girls & Football SA touch, we included a pink card for good behavior!

At Girls & Football SA, we place an emphasis on creating a safe space for discussion on difficult and private topics. Therefore, in order to provide our players with privacy to share their thoughts, we engaged in conversations with them outside of the official workshop agenda.

Overall, we're grateful to have witnessed some very important changes in the way our participants interacted. Towards the end of the 6 week workshops, the girls showed that they felt both closer as a group, and more trusted with the workshop leaders. A large number of girls demonstrated that they were capable of taking responsibility, they actively listened during explanations, and it seemed as though they felt freer to express joy whilst playing games. Through a survey conducted with the participants at the beginning of the six weeks, we've been able to garner further insight into how to improve our programming on Sexual Health.