

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SPORT – THE RIGHT TO PLAY SAFE

Dr. Susan Bissell
Chief, Implementing International Standards Unit

'Play the Game'
31 October 2007

Acknowledgements

Governments of Norway and Sweden, the former for its specific contribution to the children and violence in sport research, and the latter to the overall work of UNICEF Innocenti

Professor Celia Brackenridge and Brunel University

Professor Kari Fasting

Professor Sandra Kirby

Professor Trish Leahy

The Committee on the Rights of the Child

Outline

- UNICEF's approach to violence globally
- International legal standards to protect children
- The UN Secretary General's study 2006
- The place of sport in UNICEF's work
- The expert panel May 2007
- Current sport-related research
- Key findings to date
- Next steps

International Legal Standards to Protect Children

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

2 principles of interpretation – best interests
evolving capacity of the child

General principles - non-discrimination
right to survival
right to participation

International Legal Standards to Protect Children

- *Negative and Positive Rights Enshrined in the CRC:*
 - Prohibition of violence, cruel and degrading treatment
 - Protection from economic exploitation, use of narcotic drugs, sexual exploitation and abuse, sale and trafficking, all forms of exploitation

 - Right to highest standard of health, education, leisure, play, freedom of association and expression
 - Rights of disabled children and to physical recovery

International Legal Standards to Protect Children

Other Intl Legal Instruments (part of an exhaustive list):

Optional Protocol (to the CRC) on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography

Intl Covenant Civil and Political Rights

Intl Covenant Economic and Social Rights

The 'Palermo Protocol' (human trafficking)

ILO Conventions (various, in particular 138, and 182)

Why do Intl Standards Matter?

- They represent the normative framework
- The CRC is now considered customary international law (even for Somalia and the USA – the non-ratifying countries)
- international standards hold states accountable for protecting children

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ARE NOT THE SOLE SOLUTION TO PROTECTING CHILDREN BUT THEY ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE SOLUTION

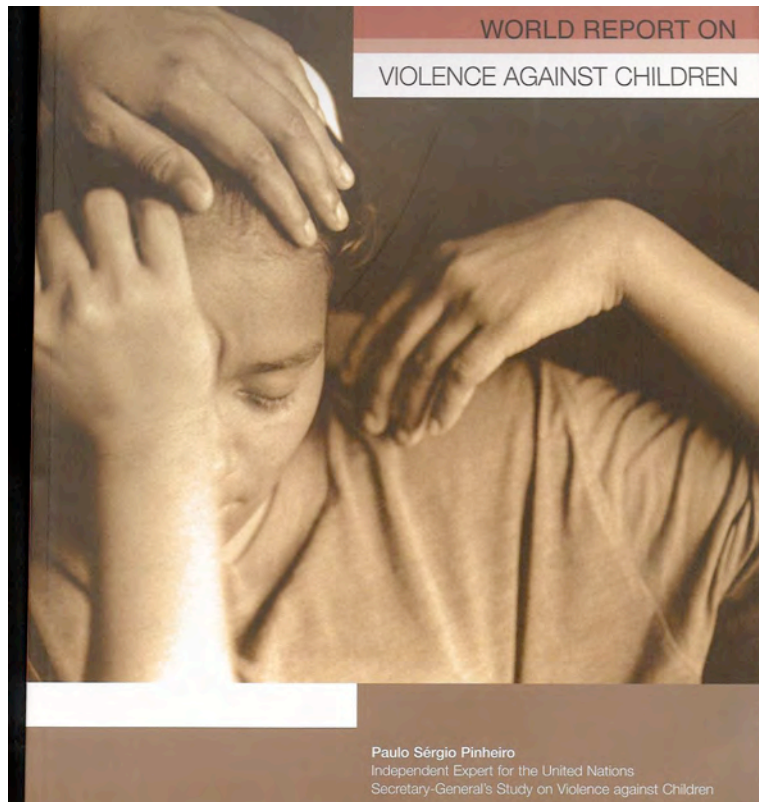
UNICEF's Approach to Violence Globally

Mission: “to advance humanity for every child through health, education, equality and protection”

Violence: “ all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation” Article 1, UNCRC

Child: Under 18 years old

The UN Study on Violence Against Children



“... 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)

“... a living process” aimed at enforcing current law, raising awareness and public education, and integrating violence prevention into all national planning processes (p. xv- xvi)

The UN Study on Violence Against Children

- Commissioned by UN Sec. General in 2001
- UNICEF, WHO, OHCHR, ILO
- Genuinely participatory process: field visits, regional, sub-regional and national consultations, including children
- All parts of the world: 136 country questionnaires returned
- Multi-disciplinary research centres, agencies and experts
- A settings approach (home/family; school; care/justice institutions; work; community)

The UN STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Implementation of Study recommendations provides strong opportunity to :

- Enhance protection of children from violence worldwide
- Advance further regional efforts to address the rights of children, ie. the Council of Europe Programme “Building a Europe for and with Children”
- Build upon leadership of Parliamentarians all over the world to consolidate legislative efforts to ban all forms of violence against children
- Engage others – including journalists – in efforts to prevent all forms of violence; and to end impunity for perpetrators

UN STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The UN Study has:

- Led to more and better **information on violence against children**
- Stressed the **urgency** to address violence as a denial of children's rights
- Promoted **strong commitment** to understand dimensions of violence and address its root causes

The Place of Sport in UNICEF's Work



Sport an essential part of UNICEF operations and partnerships

“It’s hard to imagine a more powerful medium ...”

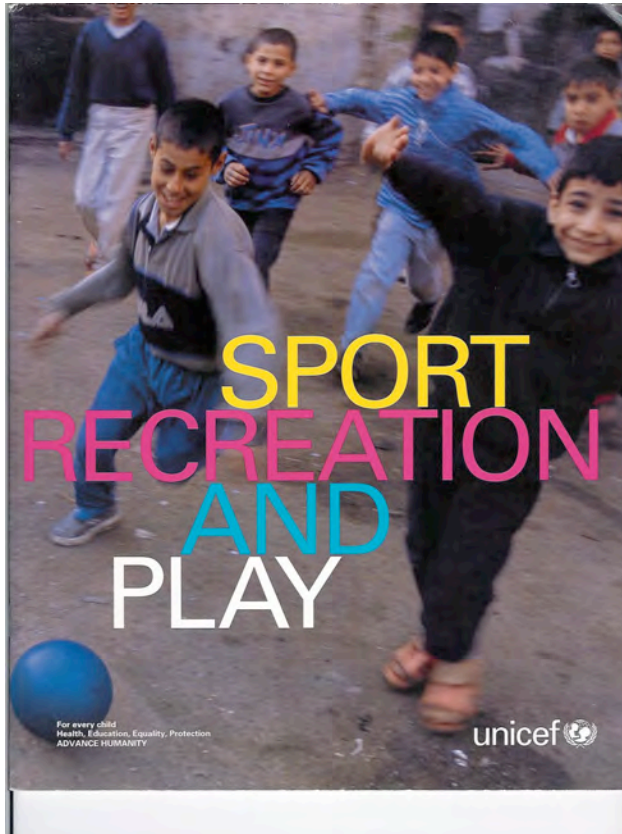
UNICEF has easy access e.g. major Sporting stars, football clubs (Madrid, for ex.)

Value of sport recognized for multiple reasons (health, education, peace)

2 major functions:

fund-raising
sport-for-development

Sport, Recreation and Play



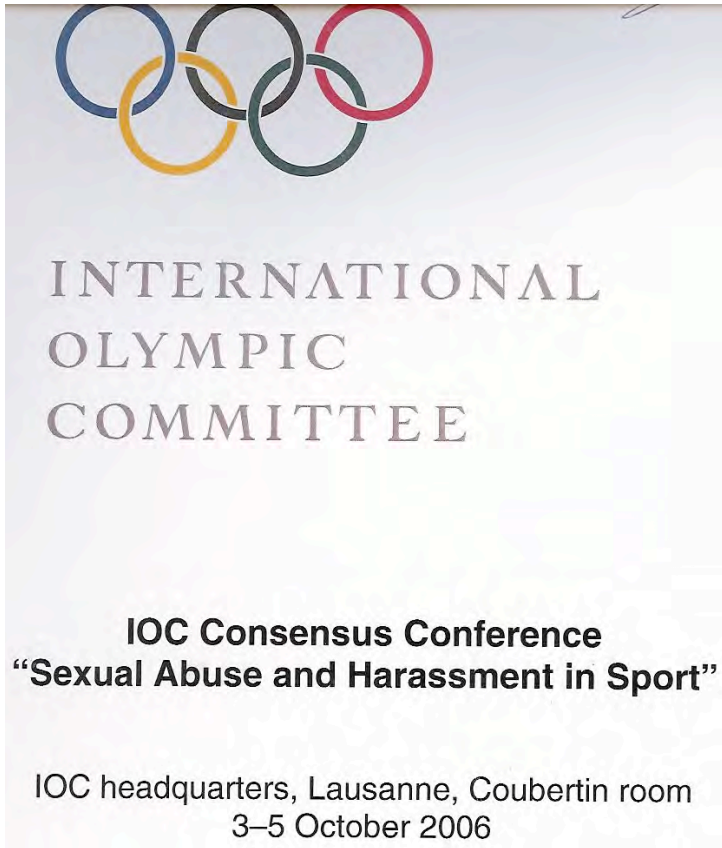
Sport especially powerful for realising the Millennium Development Goals

This booklet seen as an advocacy tool for sport-for-development

... but sport barely visible in the UN Study on Violence against children

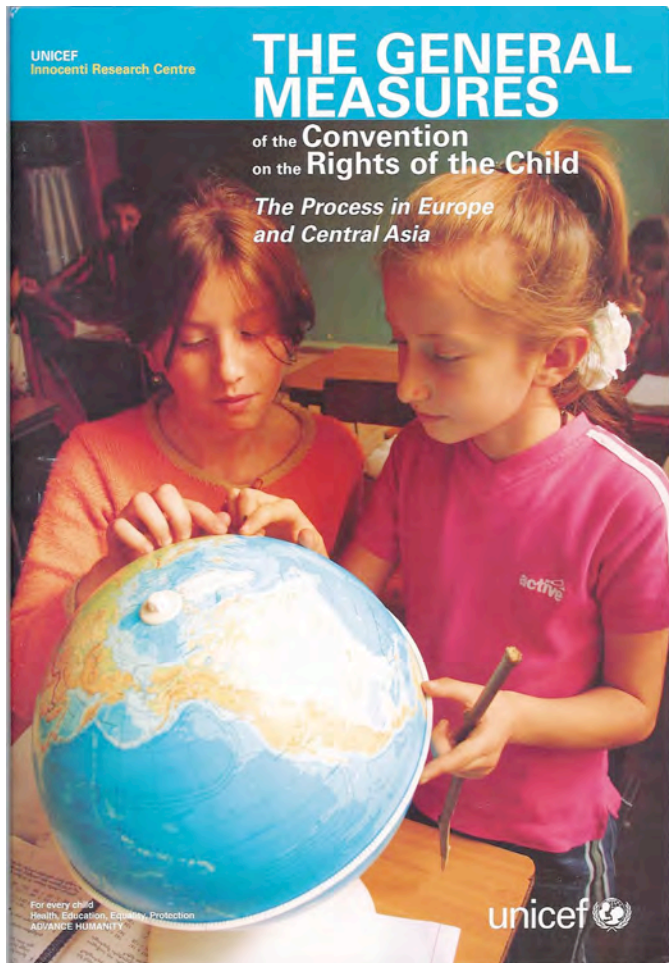
AND ... child protection not in evidence in sport schemes

The Expert Panel May 2007



- April 2006: UNICEF approached about global research in sport
- Oct 2006: 16 experts met with IOC
- May 2007: A sub-group met with UNICEF
- Research presentations about abuse and child protection in sport
- June 2007: UNICEF sport-for-development panel meeting
- The 'ah ha' moment ...

The Expert Panel May 2007



How to ensure that child protection is at the heart of sport for development work?

Current Sport-related Research

Two projects:

1. Searches of the 2,000 supporting documents from the UN Study on Violence Against Children to extract sport-related information and identify research and policy gaps
2. A UNICEF Innocenti Digest (extended review) of sources on violence to children in sport, again to identify knowledge, policy and geographic gaps

Key Findings to Date

Violence against children in sport evidenced, thus far, in:

- Gender and sexual harassment
- Sexual abuse
- Hazing and bullying
- Homophobic abuse
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- HIV/AIDS related violence
- Disabled and vulnerable athletes experience of abuse

Key Findings to Data

Under the category physical abuse:

- Physical norms, overtraining and risk of injury
- Peer aggression
- Child labour
- Parental pressure
- Disordered eating
- Doping/drug abuse
- Alcohol abuse
- Trafficking

Key Findings to Date

There are enormous challenges to data collection-

Child sport a sanctified space

Domain of family, community seen as 'private'

Perceived parental 'ownership' of children by parents

Few prosecutions of perpetrators therefore perceived impunity

No national or international outcry – CRC Committee with no general comments on the matter (to date), no references in its concluding observations

Next Steps

- Nov 2007: Meeting again to review both drafts
- Dec 2007: Submit final reports
- 2008: Submit proposal for an empirical study to fill some of the gaps
- Mar-Jun 2008: write a source book on Global Violence and Children in Sport with research data, good practice, national and local programme examples and codes of practice/charters
- 2008 : Prepare international violence prevention/safeguarding standards for application in sport-for-development schemes, based on the research, and at the invite of London 2012