



Can girls join in?

Imagine yourself living in rural India: lots of dust around you and every once in a while a goat or a cow. In the fields you see hard working men and slaving women. Some boys play under the tree in the village square. No, *no girls*. Girls are at home or in the fields to help their parents.

Suryakant Kulkarni, one of our Indian project partners, wrote: *"Sex equality absolutely was an unknown word for our villagers. Now it has become an important issue. For so long girls have been seen as inferior to boys, as a utensil. Girls and boys lived in separate worlds. We thought that to reach equality we had to start with young children and now they can play together in school. They even play two games: judo and korfbal."*

I'll tell you what I
really would love to
do.
Running, yelling and
laughing!

Sunita, 12

Till recently girls just had to work, wait till they are married off and then leave to the village where their husband lived. Slowly things are improving for girls. Only their brothers were allowed to run, laugh and shout, brothers who didn't have to help at home and did get milk in their tea...

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Are boys and girls allowed to do sport together?

In school girls and boys are strictly segregated. In village meetings Yojana has convinced parents to send their daughters to school as well. That was not the custom. The mothers themselves never were in school. For what reason should their daughters attend? Now they understand that it is beneficial for everyone when girls join school and we have seen good progress. Slowly inequality is lessening, but we want more.

We at Yojana thought that if we provide girls and boys with the opportunity to do sport together then they will start considering it normal to do the same things and will learn to see one another more as equals - not as objects anymore,

but as human beings. For most people in India, children doing sport together is just a bridge too far.

The introduction of mixed sports was rather exciting. Not all girls were prepared to join immediately but we managed. Girls and boys now play sport together now in over 60 villages and it really is accepted. Not only is it accepted, they love it! They run, shout and... laugh!

The parents have changed as well. Parents who did not even allow their own son and daughter to play together at home now really are excited when they see girls and boys playing these sports together.



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Do you know?

10 years ago, before Yojana started its work, only half of the children were in school. Very young children had to work already.

Now all children in our project villages visit school. .



Support us and become famous in rural India...

Our approach has shown good results and thus we want to expand to all 122 villages in the area. However the parents in these villages are really poor. Most of the children have just one set of clothing for home and school. A tear would be a disaster. We would like to support all these children with a set of sturdy sports clothing: shirt, trousers, shoes and a cap as sun/dust protection. Of course we also need judo mats, balls and korfbal equipment. For each village and for 40 children we need to spend £1020 (or € 1.250,-).

The logo of Vos College in Schiedam has already been printed on these shirts.



We gladly will have the logo of your company printed on the shirts when you support one or more villages and we will give you a seat in the VIP- box on our website.

You can find more information on www.yojana.nl.

For questions or to join with us, please e-mail info@yojana.nl.

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Socio-Economic
Development Trust

Dear Yojana supporters,

On Yojana's advice, three years ago we started mixed sports here in the most rural parts of India. The idea to use sports to cover the gaps between girls and boys was quite a big step for us, yet we have been able to convince the parents of ten girls (and five boys) to allow them to participate in a three-week training course far from home to become future sports trainers for the youth in our villages. The parents didn't quite know what this training was about but they supported their daughters and their sons. After the girls reached back it was a real shock, especially for the mothers, to see their daughters competing with boys. Not just playing sport, but even wrestling. Well, the girls called it judo, but still. None of the parents had ever heard about judo before. We organised demonstrations in the villages. The mothers especially enjoyed when they saw girls beat boys: "My daughter never will be attacked by a boy. She really can defend herself now."

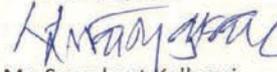
Things started moving. No parent in the six villages where we started objected to this new mixed sport. Later we also showed them korfbal and acceptance even was easier. Slowly we expanded our activities to other villages. More and more girls and boys participated. We started providing the children with sports clothing because otherwise the children had to play in what was often their only set of clothing. This, of course, was a tremendous stimulus for the youth to join the activities. Mixed sports really became a movement. Girls really play quite freely with boys.

The results are obvious. Parents have accepted this mixed sport much faster than we dared to hope for. We have observed a really big social change. Hundreds of parents who were very much against any contact between girls and boys now accept that they play together and even that they touch one another. Girls and boys just interact freely in school and in the village. The feeling that they belong to different worlds just disappeared. In the past we saw them walking to school strictly separated. Now they are just one group of happy chattering youngsters.

The parents didn't just accept these changes; they even stimulated them. They sent their daughters to the sports grounds. That is such a change in their thinking!! These are the same parents who, until recently, forbade their daughters to even speak with male class mates. Now they are cheering when their daughters play korfbal together with the boys.

For years the Indian Government has tried to implement programs to promote sex equality without much impact. But now we witness the results of our mixed sports and other activities. Thousands of adults are aware now and think about equality as we do. It is so important to expand this mixed sports activity to many more villages. We need to try to supply more sports uniforms and other facilities like judo mats and korfbal equipment. We are prepared to fight for it. Please join us!!

With Regards,



Mr. Suryakant Kulkarni
Executive Director/ Chief functionary



The letter on this page was sent to us by Suryakant Kulkarni, Executive Director of Yojana partner SEDT. It has been revised by Yojana.

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