

Feminist Sports Champion Toolkit

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COVID-19

In 2020, COVID-19 threatened to erase the momentum and unprecedented attention that girls' sport has gained around the world. From the elite to the grassroots, the gaps between women and men, girls and boys started to widen, with girls and women losing access to the benefits of sport.

At WW, we believe that girls and women taking action in their communities are at the centre of change. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for both smaller scale initiatives as well as more organisations around the world seizing the opportunity to bring girls into decision making. Outbreaks and crises compound existing inequalities and disproportionately affect women and girls and therefore it is important to continue providing opportunities to develop both leadership and economic resilience.

Under lockdown measures...

Under lockdown measures, girls and women are at significantly increased risk of experience:

- Different forms of violence
- Unplanned pregnancies
- Child marriage
- School drop-out

As schools close and sports programmes stop, girls and women lose access to their safe spaces, mentors and support networks.

If activities are shifted online, girls and young women may be less likely to engage due to the priority of care work, household chores and due to the digital divide.

Girls and women are uniquely impacted...

- Erasure of joy, freedom and pleasure
- Limited physical activity or movement
- Social isolation
- Violence and trauma
- Lack of peer support networks
- Deteriorating financial situations of families

In combination, these factors will challenge girls' and women's health and threaten their educational and economic rights.

For Champions participating in a seed grant programme, working to design and implement their own projects, can provide many benefits during COVID-19, including;

Transferable skills - In designing and implementing their own projects, Champions will have the opportunity to develop new leadership skills. These skills are transferable and will support them in finding future employment.

Improved mental and physical health - Isolation and social distancing have caused an increase in mental health issues among girls and women. By participating in a seed grant programme, working together, even remotely or online, can support Champions to feel connected to their peers and reduce loneliness. Using sport, getting active and having fun will also work to improve the overall well-being of your Champions.

Economic opportunities - With businesses typically closed during COVID-19 as a result of lockdown measures, the economic prospects of girls and women are often severely impacted as the industries that are typically female-dominated (e.g. hospitality) are forced to close. By participating in a seed grant programme and compensating themselves suitably for their time, the economic hardships can be eased. We have also seen that if a Champion needs the support of an additional coach or friend to support with their projects, they will provide further financial compensation, thus expanding the economic benefits of the programme beyond the Champions.

Support network - COVID-19 impacts girls and women in a myriad of ways, including adverse effects on their personal safety, bodily autonomy and health. In particular, rates of sexual and gender-based violence and early forced marriage will very likely increase. By participating in this programme, both participants and Champions will have access to an extensive network that can support them during this time.



