

“I AM WORTH DEFENDING”

HOW SEXUAL CONSENT IS TAUGHT
AROUND THE WORLD

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A group of young women are sitting in a circle on a sandy ground, engaged in a discussion. They are dressed in casual clothing, including school uniforms and patterned dresses. The women are looking towards the center of the circle, suggesting a collaborative or listening activity. The background is a vast, open sandy area.

Why this project?

I asked him to stop. He didn't. I wrote about it.

People messaged me to say similar things had happened to them. They said they hadn't been able to find the right words.

He read it. He apologised. He said I'd taught him a lot about consent.

Then, I wrote then to understand what had happened. Now, I write in the hope it might prevent some other girl having to teach some other boy about consent the hard way.

It is not her job to teach him.

*"later that night
i held an atlas in my lap
ran my fingers across the whole world
and whispered
where does it hurt?"*

*it answered
everywhere
everywhere
everywhere."*

- Warsan Shire

The power of sex education

It is not hard to find shocking statistics about sexual violence. Just stick in a pin in the map and Google. In the UK alone, 85,000 women and 12,000 men are raped every year, worldwide, one in three women have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, and it is estimated that 50% of transgender people have experienced sexual violence.

Sex education makes our world safer. It has the power to reduce the spread of STIs including HIV/ AIDs. It has the power to bring down numbers of early and unwanted pregnancies. It has the power to keep girls in school longer and to prevent them from falling into poverty. It has the power to prevent early and forced marriages, to lead to fewer cases of harassment, sexual assault, rape, female genital mutilation, domestic violence and online bullying. It has the power to reduce numbers of sexual violence related deaths and to help develop healthier and happier populations.

Much of this has already been proven. Yet sex education is the one subject uniformly unregulated in schools. In many places it's not taught at all. As Lynn Enright writes in her book *Vagina: A Re-Education*, "We have been taught far more about shame than about our anatomy."

The way sex education is taught in the UK is changing. It is becoming increasingly common for universities to provide a class on

consent for freshers, and there are many independent bodies holding consent sessions in schools and colleges across the country. But the most significant impact is still to come, with the UK government's recently introduced sex and relationship curriculum, set to be rolled out in schools from 2020. We have yet to see how thorough and successful this will be.

The curriculum is already facing problems, with parents rioting at the idea of their children being taught about LGBTQI+ relationships. Many of their arguments hark back to Section 28, the law introduced in 1988 under Margaret Thatcher's government (and lifted in 2000), which argued that schools were promoting homosexuality by talking about gay relationships and gay sex. The fear at the core of this argument is common the world over. In every country in which I have talked about sex ed, the primary difficulty has always been getting conservative and religious parents on board with teaching their children about

relationships, especially any information that strays from the traditional, heterosexual image. Many see sex education in any form as pushing children towards sexual activity.

One concern for the new curriculum is the training teachers get. In studies on sex education, it is a common finding that the majority of teachers don't feel adequately prepared.

The new course is for secondary schools only. Primary school children will be taught about healthy friendships, but from the information currently available on the new course, I don't think it plans to go far enough. I believe it is important for younger children to be learning about consent, both in and out of a sexual context. If a child is old enough to have experienced abuse, they are old enough to learn signs of it in order to stay safe, and to know when and how to ask for help.

The new course is a step in the right direction - those children will get a far better education

I believe that comprehensive sex education - with a focus on sexual consent - can lower these statistics.



any of my friends ever did - but up to the age of 15, parents will have the right to withdraw their children from the class. I am curious about the different ways sex ed can be taught, and how resistant parents can be brought on board.

There is a difference between feeding children information and them engaging with it. Even if you get the child in the class, how do you then keep them interested and make them want to learn? I was interested in the idea of learning through play, and curious about how combining sex ed with a skills-based task could engage students more than a regular sit-down-and-listen lesson.

Most of the limited sex ed I got in my state secondary school was met with sighs and giggles, with everyone ready to either embarrass or be embarrassed. In primary school, it was practically non-existent; I remember once we were shown a video of an alien that was supposed to teach us how babies were made. But I had a music lesson so I missed the end.

There is so much more that sex ed must be that teaching girls how not to get pregnant. It must teach healthy relationships and signs of abusive ones. It must teach about various forms of assault and what to do when you encounter one. It must have in depth and honest discussions about porn and its impact on expectations for sex. It must talk about sex for people with disabilities. It must talk about prostitution in its various forms. It must talk about gender equality and feminism. It must talk about female pleasure and the female orgasm. It must talk about a wide range of LGBTQI+ issues, including gay sex and trans rights and why calling your friend "gay" in the playground can be more hurtful than it seems. It must face up to high rates of suicide among trans people and teach how to be allies. It must and talk about the various mental health issues that can occur from sexual assault. It must be body-positive; it must talk about the good, the bad, the ugly and squelchy of sex. And vitally, it must talk about sexual consent.

I have focused on the education of consent because it is central to all issues around sexual assault. By targeting the current generation of school children, we can change the way millions of children understand their bodies, their boundaries and those of others. If we can explain to children what their rights and responsibilities are with regards to sexual consent, I believe we will reduce numbers of sexual assault.

If some of the projects I witnessed on this research trip were rolled out globally, I have no doubt the world would be a safer and less violent place. At the end of this report, I have several suggestions of how we might alter the way we teach consent and sex education in the UK.

A note: When I talk about perpetrators, I refer to men and boys, and for victims, I primarily refer to women and girls. All genders are vulnerable to sexual assault, but statistically a perpetrator is most likely to be male.

Travel

For this project, I travelled to Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and India. These countries all face either abstinence-only curriculums or cultures of silence around sex and sexual assault. Because their governments are either hesitant or resistant towards teaching comprehensive sex education, individual organisations are taking the lead on educating young people about sexual health and consent. This is primarily happening outside of the classroom and there is often a tricky balance of appeasement between parents, government and religious organisations.

I wanted to spend time with organisations that are teaching sexual consent through unusual forms of education, such as sport and drama, with the idea of thinking about how these ideas could be replicated in the UK. I had already written about UK based organisations using forum theatre to teach consent, and wanted to understand how it was done elsewhere, particularly in areas with very conservative values where these topics are taboo. Of the organisations I spent time with, some took place within schools, or on school-time, but none were rolled out country-wide, and all were led by external organisations.

These were some of the questions I was asking:

- How can you start to make an impact in an area with high statistics of sexual violence?*
- How can we replicate the positive aspects of these programmes in the UK?*
- How do you get parents to agree to teaching their children about sex?*
- How can these sites of creative activity be used as a classroom?*
- How can you get funding for these programmes?*
- How can you ensure children keep attending?*
- What are the biggest obstacles?*
- Have they seen any difference?*

I talked to people on football pitches and basketball courts, in computer labs and rehearsal rooms, in slums and school playgrounds. Each offered something different, but many shared similar techniques. Overall, I spent time with 15 organisations and spoke to or emailed many more. Along the way I realised some didn't quite fit the project, and others I simply couldn't see because of logistics. In Rwanda, some organisations were nervous about media laws so spoke to me anonymously.

I am grateful to everyone who gave me their time. For this report, I have focused on ten organisations I felt inspired by. The research was not always easy, but to see the work these organisations are doing and the change they are making was always an enormous pleasure. The trip was, overall, fuelled by hope.

The ten organisations are:

- From Kenya:* SHOFKO, Ujamaa Africa, Lagnet Theatre
- From Uganda:* Tackle Africa, Ask Without Shame, KampaBits
- From Rwanda:* Shooting Touch
- From India:* Parcham, The Red Brigade.



Sport

“The real problem here is a massive elephant in the room: our own culture. Our social values, our media - so influential on impressionable young girls - that have been allowed, for millennia, to send out this powerful, alienating message about girls and sport: that sport is unfeminine, that sport makes you sweaty and muscular, that sport is swearing and violence, that sport is ugliness in a world where women’s sole priority, value and focus should be beauty and becoming an object of desire.”

- Anna Kessel, *Eat Sweat Play*

If we tell girls that they cannot play sports, or that they are not good at them, we teach them to hide their bodies. We teach them to aim for beauty rather than strength. We teach them to be passive rather than active. We teach them that aggression, competition are strength are male traits, and that submissiveness and weakness are female ones.

Each court, pitch or studio I visited for this project demonstrated the multitudes girls gain from participating in sport, particularly when it is focused on their ownership of their own bodies and the boundaries set for other people. They gain confidence, body positivity, strength, self-respect, team-work, commitment, skills and self-belief.

Sport makes them acutely aware of their bodies and offers a space to explain how they work. By teaching young people about their bodies in an atmosphere of pride and confidence, we can change their attitudes towards their own self-worth. Their bodies become something to be proud of rather than scared or ashamed of.

Likewise, using sport to teach boys about their bodies, about their strength and their boundaries, helps them respect themselves and others. With an hour or so every week, they are helping youth people work through the inevitable fears and confusions of youth, and grow into more respectful and confident adults.





Tackle Africa & Soccer Without Borders, Uganda

WHAT: Using football drills as metaphors for sex.

WHO FOR: All genders. U18s. Refugees.

WHERE: Kampala, Uganda. Also across Africa.

LESSON: Fun. Skills-based. Coaches create trust.

Soccer Without Borders (SWB) use football to support refugees. In Kampala, the majority of their participants are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Most have fled violence and war, leaving behind the people, language and homes that they knew. On average, students spend a year with SWB, doing a mixture of English lessons, football training, empowerment and social time, before enrolling in school full time. Once a week, SWB team up with Tackle Africa, who use football to teach sex education.

All children should learn about their bodies and boundaries, but it is particularly important for those who have experienced violence. It is vital to support them and show them healthy attitudes towards relationships, communication, their bodies and sex. In Tackle Africa sessions, Tackle Africa use football drills as metaphors for sex: goals, passing on diseases, communication. The youngest teams are mixed gender while the older ones are divided. This allows the older students to ask more personal questions without embarrassment.

In one session I watched, a group of fifteen young girls gathered in a circle on a strip of dusty land in downtown Kampala. Their coach, Delphe Bahaya, was looking for three things: communication, accuracy and movement. He wove the drill into the joint decisions needed in a relationship, using the example of choosing to use a condom. "The better you communicate," he said to the girls, "the better and safer your relationship will be." He put responsibility on both parties, but talked about the importance of respecting your partner's wishes, including their desire not to have sex.

The girls asked questions without hesitation or awkwardness. Boldly and openly, they asked about condoms and not having sex and whether you have to have sex if you're married. Feeling confident and comfortable on the pitch while playing sport allows them to open up and ask the questions they might otherwise be too shy to ask. Several coaches told me how much the girls have grown in confidence through playing; most had never played a team sport before.

The role of the coach is vital. Having a coach lead the sessions, rather than a teacher, sheds a layer of embarrassment. The students look up to their coach, so trust them with their curiosities and anxieties. This is an idea explored in another brilliant organisation, Coaching Boys Into Men, where football trainings are followed by a 15 chat with their coach about respect, strength and consent.

The crucial factor that ensures Tackle Africa's success is that it's fun. The students want to come back for the next session, to improve their game, to spend time with their friends and to have the chance to play. I watched a boys' match with Programme Manager Pius Kadapao, who like Delphe was a Tackle Africa player first. I asked him why he thinks this model works. "In school sometimes the session becomes boring," he said, "the teacher becomes boring and you're dozing. But you can't doze on a football pitch."

I have written more about Tackle Africa for Guardian Weekend, published April 2019.





*“There is so much
beauty in the
strength of football.”*

- Parcham player

Parcham, India

WHAT: Using football to change conservative attitudes towards women and women's bodies.

WHO FOR: Girls and young women in Mumra who are otherwise not allowed to play football.

WHERE: Mumra, India.

LESSON: Reclaim space, both public and private.

Set up in 2012, Parcham was kept a secret for the first year. In Mumra, a highly conservative suburb of Mumbai, boys dominate the playground. Many disapprove of girls playing sports - especially in shorts, which are seen as too revealing - and it was seen as too much of a risk to admit what Parcham women were doing at first. Only after a year did the 40 women involved tell their friends and family.

The organisation was set up to allow girls to play football, reclaiming public space and changing society's attitudes towards the limits of a female body. Alongside the sport, they teach lessons on puberty, safe sex and consent.

Aquila is one of the coaches who founded the team. “We have to reclaim our space,” she told me. “We have to be seen in public space. You see women going to mosque or market but we had to break the stereotypical ideas of Muslim women.” At first, people would laugh at them. Now, they stop to watch. Sometimes parents come and support in matches, and if one girl's parents won't let her play, the whole team will turn up to plead for her.

The girls all get given Parcham kit - purple and white - but they wear whatever they feel comfortable in. Some run in shorts and hijabs, others with hair loose or legs covered. The team currently has a male coach, though they have started training girls to give the team a positive, strong female role model and show them they can do jobs typically seen as male. This has worked for the players; one girl who started with Parcham now plays for the state.

*At first, people would laugh at them.
Now they stop to watch.*

As well as changing the image of women in their community, the founders wanted to change the image of their town. Mumra has been known for its crime. “Now if you Google search it, you get the girls football team.” In this way, lifting the girls lifts the community.

Nerul, another key member of the Parcham team, explained that as well as the football training, they do community issue sessions once or twice a month. They look at difficulties the women are facing and search for solutions as a team. They talk about homosexuality and trans rights, about their own rights and how to say that you feel uncomfortable in a relationship. The feeling of being a close-knit team from football allows them to be open with each other.

Attitudes are slow to change. One of the parent's main worries is girls becoming too masculine, and recently one girl was taken out of the team for that reason. But it seems the work Parcham are doing in building confidence is changing this idea, at least in the players if not in the parents. Talking to one of the players at the end of training, I asked her about the gap between the descriptions of boys and girls as “pretty” or “strong”. With one hand on hip and the other curled around the ball, she was unphased. She said: “There is so much beauty in the strength of football.”

Shooting Touch, Rwanda

WHAT: Using basketball to educate and empower at-risk youth and women.

WHO FOR: Girls, boys and women in rural villages.

WHERE: Kayonza, Rwanda.

LESSON: Creating communities, using incentives, adjusting to needs.



Shooting Touch use the basketball court as a classroom, marrying the concepts of physical and mental well-being. Local Rwandan coaches and American volunteers currently trains over 750 young people, and 350 women, in four villages in the Eastern Province of Kigali. With sexual health organisation Paper Crown, Shooting Touch also provide a female empowerment curriculum. This is a three month course for 16-18 year olds which educates women about their rights and freedoms and teaches them how to be leaders. When I visited they had just finished the course and were preparing to run a similar one for boys.

Shooting Touch was formed in 2007 in Boston. In 2012, they started a programme in Rwanda, with the aim of helping rebuild society after the 1994 genocide, the impact of which is still felt incredibly deeply across the country, most significantly in the poorer areas. 67% of Rwanda is under 25. It is vital they are aided and supported in their health, education and understanding of positive relationships.

At first, the programme experienced difficulties. It attracted mostly boys, so they started sessions for women only. They made work out sessions for women with five minutes of basketball at the end, but the women would fake illness and turn up only for the basketball, so they adapted and gave them more game time. There was a lot of backlash. Husbands were resistant, even blaming women for a drought one year because they were dribbling a ball round a court rather than supporting their families. Several women would lie about going to training, instead saying they'd gone to market.

In order to get men on board with women playing basketball, Shooting Touch used several techniques. One was the introduction of family days, where they'd invite men and children to learn what the wives were doing. The family fays also create the opportunity to educate the men. I talked to Chloe Rothman, Programme Director for Shooting Touch. "All we really need is a game of basketball or football [at a family day] and 500 maize to get [the men] to sit and listen to an hour of gender equality talk," she said. "They have so much fun playing, they'll come back to watch." Now, 90% of men in the area support women doing sport. Previously it was 50%.

Another technique Shooting Touch use is offering incentives. They found people were missing basketball sessions due to illness. In Rwanda, you can't insure just one person for health insurance, it has to be for the whole family. In areas of extreme poverty such as Kayonza, this is unaffordable for many. With the agreement of attending 75% of sessions, Shooting Touch pay health insurance for the families. Because of this, lots of men now see basketball as the women's' job. "That's really helped get men on board." Having women and girls on court is also starting to change perceptions of gender roles. "When women play basketball, someone's got to hold the baby."

I visited the court in Rukura, a rural village a few hours out of the centre of Kigali, for the first session with a new cohort of American volunteers. When the women play, they wear a mix of shorts, skirts, dresses, jeans. Wearing shorts was frowned upon, but what matters now are the colours of the bibs. Yellow vs orange. As I watch, they leave fire in their wake. On the sidelines, those not playing start up a chant, cheering the players on. Kids whose sessions have finished stay to watch.

"You saw them [the women] dancing and screaming today," Rothman said. "They don't say a peep at home, and they just do what they're supposed to do. Here, they can let loose. Sport can bring that out that inner loud excitement, that voice that they've always had. In sport, It's like physical strength turns into mental strength."

"People know when they're Shooting Touch women or Shooting Touch girls," Rothman explained. "We had this one girl come up and tell us a story about how a boy was forcing sex on her and was trying to rape her and she told him 'oyeshimbisaka' - no, I don't want - and he laughed and said you must be a Shooting Touch girl. Then he walked away. You hear these stories and you're like wow, these girls really are listening. They use what we teach them."

"You get these kids for an hour on the court everyday and you don't know what goes on at home, but at least you know you're giving them the tools. That's all we can really hope for. Our boys, they really respect the hell out of girls. Even the little boys are sitting around cheering at the women playing. Boys and girls dont really interact too much outside of, even in sports teams here it's all like boys football clubs and stuff." Here, they do the same drills. They have the same amount of time on court. They have the same coaches. They have the same crowds turn up for their games. " Just having them on the same court I think is really important."

SHOFCO 's Yoga for trauma, Kenya

WHAT: Using yoga to rebuild confidence in girls affected by violence.

WHO FOR: Vulnerable girls growing up in the Kibera slum.

WHERE: Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya.

LESSON: Connect body and mind.

SHOFCO stands for Shining Hope for Communities. It is a grass-roots organisation that works with large-scale transformation in urban slums, focusing on the education and development of women and girls. SHOFCO is based in Kibera, one of the largest slums in Africa. Located in southwest Nairobi, a few kilometres from the city centre, it is hard to know exactly how many people live in Kibera, but figures range from 170,000 to 2 million. Most residents live in extreme poverty, with high rates of unemployment and HIV. Clean water is scarce, education rare and assault common.

Once a week, SHOFCO School for Girls hosts a yoga-for-trauma session for girls, aged 9-13. All have been referred for their experiences of gender based violence in Kibera. The sessions are led by Jessie Wolz. Wolz moved from working on peacebuilding in conflict zones to using yoga as tool for peacebuilding. Breathing, poses and meditation make up the hour, plus doses of dance, sometimes song and journal writing. Wolz's sessions don't involve talking therapy, but her teaching is supplementary to counselling provided by SHOFCO.

The idea behind yoga for trauma is that by connecting the mind and body, participants begin to feel more in control of themselves.

This approach is used after an assault but it works not only to support those affected, but to prevent the cycle of violence from being repeated.

Wolz focuses on connecting the girls' minds and bodies. "If you survived trauma, especially a physical violation of the body," she explained to me later, "often to cope, you disconnect from your body, because this is a place where something awful has happened. So we're trying to ground them back into their bodies and know that it belongs to them and it's something they have power over - at least on the inside, because of course having experienced trauma they know that some people can violate their bodies. But I want to help them understand that what happens on the inside is under their control. That why I'm constantly saying: Get out of your head and into your body. It is your home."

Often in yoga, an instructor might gently pull or push a body. With trauma-informed yoga, there's no touch. After five months, Wolz says she's once touched her hands to press down on their backs in a certain position, but only after giving them warning and having worked hard to gain their trust.

Getting young girls to concentrate for an hour is no easy task, so the

session is playful to keep their interest. Wolz holds her feet in the air and extends them into a sitting triangle. The girls follow, wobbling. One holds onto her feet valiantly as she rolls backwards. They giggle.

Towards the end of the session they crowd round Jessi to choose a song on her phone, one clamoring onto the table behind her to see. One girl has been lying down for the session, preferring to be present but not participate. She doesn't join in the dance but does mouth along with the words.


It starts raining as they finish dancing so Wolz uses the white noise of the patter against the window pane and brings them into a few minutes of nidra, or sleep. They lie on their backs or bellies and Wolz asks them to set a positive intention, which one of the older girls explains to the rest of the class is like a plan you have that's difficult for you in some way to achieve. They tense and relax their muscles in a guided meditation. One tickles another, one swings her legs from side to side. Jessi keeps talking, the rain carries on pelting, and they settle.

Yoga does what sex ed often fails to do: it makes girls understand and feel comfortable in their own bodies. It gives them a sense of belonging in their own skin, of

understanding boundaries and of recognising that other people should respect theirs. It makes them realise their bodies are their own. It teaches them about consent from understanding who has the right to touch their body, and that they legally have the power to say no.

These girls know from experience that people have the power to abuse this right, but by educating them about consensual touch, and by helping them understand good and bad touch, they are given more power; more power to resist being groomed by older men, or lured by neighbours. Yoga does not protect them from further assault, but it does help them be aware that assault is not their fault, to label assault for what it is, and to have someone they feel safe with to turn to for help.





“You get these kids for an hour on the court everyday and you don’t know what goes on at home, but at least you know you’re giving them the tools. That’s all we can really hope for.”

- Chloe Rothman, *Shooting Touch*

Recommendations for: *consent education through sport*

Connection of mind and body

By connecting body and mind, you can instill a sense of mental and physical self-worth. I saw this in the assurances Wolz gave in her yoga classes, telling girls their bodies were theirs and other people should respect them. Rothman quoted a statistic that 94% of C-suite women (top senior executives in corporate business) have played sports competitively. It is unsurprising, given that sport teaches confidence, physical and mental strength and an understanding of team-work and power.

A connection of mind and body also teaches participants about boundaries. It teaches about good and bad touch, and how to recognise and trust your gut instincts. We must teach children to understand and value their own bodies.

Fun, active and skills-based

Make it fun. The best sessions I saw - in whatever sport - were the ones where laughter was frequent, where the participants felt comfortable enough to giggle with their coaches, and to ask questions knowing that they would only ever be laughed with, never laughed at.

Having a skills-based activity means that, if taught engagingly, the students will want to come back to improve. If you make a team-based, skills-based activity fun, then participants will be even keener to return in order to spend time with their teammates.

Mentors

The coach is a mentor, idol, and often parental figure. They play a significant role in how comfortable their players feel. The coach must be non-judgmental, trustworthy, good at listening and adept at telling when something is wrong with one of their players. They must be well trained in sexual health as well as their sport, and know how to best support difficult cases.

Reclaim space, both public and private

These sports all work to change the mindset of a community. They help people see men and women as more equal, help men see women as strong and as assets to the community. They show women as active rather than passive. All of these have impacts on the way the members of the community treat each other, whether in public or behind closed doors.

Get parents on board

One common issue when setting up a programme was men not wanting their wives or daughters to taking part e.g. participating in what’s considered a man’s sport. By encouraging men to watch matches, inviting them to family days or helping them see the benefits (for themselves as well as the women) in the sessions, they gradually changed their views and largely began to support the initiatives.

Drama

“Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it.”

- Augusto Boal

In 2018, I wrote an article for The Guardian (“Drama Out of Crisis, 13.01.18) about how theatre can be used to change attitudes towards consent. I spoke to organisations from the UK, Malawi and Venezuela using forum theatre (where scenarios are presented for audiences to interrupt and alter), legislative theatre (a similar form with the ultimate intent to impact the law) as well as stand-up comedy to talk about the taboo of sexual consent. Through writing this article, I learnt about Lagnet Theatrx in Eastern Kenya.

Lagnet make work that engages with and challenges issues facing their community. When I visited, they were working on a play called *Are We There Yet?* It is a piece of forum theatre developed in the 1990s by a group of Canadian practitioners. Lagnet were planning to take the play to schools and markets in order to educate young people about sexual health, positive relationships and consent.

The piece feels its age. The premise relies on heavy handed metaphors linking sex to driving, which feels especially odd considering the community Lagnet live and work in is poor, with badly paved roads; most access is by motorbike taxis and it is unlikely that many of the young people Lagnet perform to will learn to drive in the near future. The company’s director, Desai Ogada, had recently moved out of the country to study in America, and it felt the group was missing a leader.

Lagnet would benefit massively from more training in applied dramatic theory, but they cannot afford it. They currently don’t earn enough to comfortably sustain everyone, and as they’re not professionally trained, they lie somewhere between amateur, community and professional. The only reason they were able to do these shows at this time was because of a donation they asked for from me to spend the week with them; they rely largely on donations and volunteers.

Nevertheless, the flaws in the set up only made me more hopeful when I saw what they had made; if this group can rally so many young people with their old-fashioned play and low budget, what could they could do with more support, financial and in-kind?

I studied Theatre and Performance at the University of Bristol and as I was leaving, the tutors were developing a course on applied theatre. I want to investigate whether there might be a way to arrange an opportunity for students to visit Lagnet and lead workshops, building to the creation of a show that in some way benefits the local community, as well as giving the students an opportunity to see how theatre can make a difference.

I was sitting with a friend from the theatre company on a motorbike taxi on our way to a school. As we spun past a clump of houses on a dirt road, our driver yelled out in Luo. I had been looking the other way and when I turned my head, all I saw was a blur. Afterwards, I asked my friend what the driver had said. There was a man beating his wife, he said. One hand drawn back, the other pinning her against the wall.



Lagnet Theatrix, Kenya

WHAT: Using forum theatre to engage directly with communities about sex and consent.

WHO FOR: Perform to young people in schools and people of all ages in markets.

WHERE: Kisumu, Kenya.

LESSON: Local practitioners, engage in group discussion.

In most areas of Kenyan society, men and women are raised and treated differently. Girls are raised to be chaste and compliant while boys are encouraged to demonstrate their adventurousness and aggression to prove their masculinity. There are widespread myths about sexual assault and fault, with false reasoning often reaching the courts. One study found that in the case of rape, half of the population will blame the victim under any circumstance. Many of these myths are prevalent because of the lack of sex education, which remains a sensitive subject, with conservative religious groups advocating for abstinence-only education. Sexual violence featured heavily in the post-election violence of 2007-8 and 2017, with few consequences for perpetrators. Marital rape is still not criminalised.

Lagnet Theatrix use a makeshift version of forum theatre to educate in public spaces. Their most recent show is about sex. By performing plays about sexual health and encouraging post-show discussion, Lagnet want to demystify the topic and encourage parents to speak; talking about sex is a job often left to grandparents in Kenya. The show they're working on, *Are We There Yet?*, developed by Canadian Jane Heather, allows students to talk about sex far more openly than they normally would.

Lagnet made cuts to to the script, with bits they deemed too saucy or inappropriate - namely the stuff about female orgasms and gay sex - cut out. Some sections were translated into Swahili and Luo, while other bits remained in English. They also ended the show with a promotion of abstinence.

As they rehearsed, I was skeptical; it seemed clunky, slow, old-fashioned and I didn't understand what the message was meant to be. But when we went into a school with the show, my doubts were swept away. Any spare inch of space was suddenly filled as Lagnet's characters swelled, their expressions bold and diction perfect. The room was drumming. Bits that in rehearsal seemed flat, now had the audience cackling. In the play, a couple have a disagreement about how far they want to go with each other; there's a whoop when she says yes to him and walks away with her arms wrapped around him, then a scream when he touches her breast and she pushes him away. With the audience, the actors talk about boundaries and respect. Throughout, they were bouncing between languages and fizzing with energy.

That the practitioners are from the community they are performing in makes a huge difference. Augusto Boal wrote that forum theatre is best performed in communities by those who have experienced the issues they're discussing. "In its purest form, both actors and spect-actors will be people who are victims of the oppression under consideration; that is why they are able to offer alternative solutions, because they themselves are personally acquainted with the oppression."

At the end of *Are We There Yet?* a teacher came up to say thank you. He said he hoped Lagnet would come back. He said he'd like them to talk about contraception and homosexuality. He asked the students for confirmation and they all shouted their agreements. Afterwards, I asked one of Lagnet's leaders, Horace Okal, how they'd talk about this while getting around the legal educational restrictions. He seemed a bit uncertain: "It's such a sensitive issue." But would you do it? He nods. "We'd try."

The change and impact Lagnet make with a nearly thirty-year-old script demonstrates what they might be able to do with stronger, updated resources, more money and more guidance.



Recommendations for: *consent education through drama*

Audience participation

Offer up a scenario then open the floor for questions and suggestions. Provide a non-judgemental space for the students to talk. Audience participation gives students a life rehearsal. It offers them the chance to probe and practice scenarios safely, discussing possible consequences.

Allow space for alternative opinions

Explore alternative opinions rather than shut them down. If someone gets information wrong, simply steer them to the right answer without making anyone feel ashamed. There is a lot of misinformation around sex, so it is important to know how to deal with it, rather than expecting everyone to already know the facts.

Community work

Work with locals as project providers. Part of what drew such big responses out of the audience of "Are We There Yet?" was the way the cast leapt between local languages. it ingrained the cast with the audience, making the pupils feel seen and heard. Just as Boal said, forum theatre - or versions of it - works best when made and performed by people who understand and have experienced the ideas discussed. Lagnet had adapted some parts of the play to work specifically for their community, offering real examples of situations students might find themselves in.

Go to them

It is important to go directly to the community spaces, rather than just wait for people to come to you. If Lagnet had held a free show for an open public in the yard where they rehearse, there's no doubt they would have had a smaller audience. The roads around Kisumu aren't great, and it would cost for each child to attend. By going to the schools and marketplaces, Lagnet managed to engage hundreds of people in tricky discussions, without them having to pay.

Technology

“Technology will not replace great teachers but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational.”

- George Couros

I genuinely think if some of these programmes were rolled out in every country, the world would be a better safer place

Seen

The internet is where most young people learn about sex. 55% of the world is online, and that number is increasing quickly. While there is an endless amount of beneficial information online, there is also a lot of false and misleading information, particularly with regards to sex. The more we can debunk myths, dismiss wrong information and promote the facts, the better educated and safer the next generation will be. An increasing number of apps and websites are being used to help educate young people about sexual health, and offer advice and guidance from sexual health professionals.

A significant number of children and young adults watch porn. The ethics of porn are complex and debatable. I believe that watching porn is a healthy part of sex and masturbation but, dark, hardcore, abusive porn easily gets passed around at schools, and it can have a damaging impact on children's understanding of and expectations for sex. Access to porn is hard to regulate. Rather than attempt to do so, I think we should be educating children about porn, about good and bad sex, about abuse and consent and healthy and unhealthy relationships. We should not, as is currently commonplace in schools and in homes, avoid the subject. Any attempt to deprive a young person of information will only, inevitably, lead to increased curiosity and resentment.

But talking about sex and technology is not just about porn, it's about creating a more equal workforce, where women have as many opportunities as men. In Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's prolific book, *Half the Sky: How to Change the World*, their findings repeatedly return to the fact that the best thing you can do to create a better world is keep girls in school. It makes them safer; it makes them smarter; it makes them get better jobs - the money from which they then put back into their families, far more so than men do - and creates a more equal, stronger society with more balanced gender roles and, as a result, less violence.

Digital literacy gives a leg up in a highly concentrated and competitive job market. By 2030 there will be a global shortage of 75-80 million medium and high-skilled workers, and an oversupply of low-skilled workers. Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) jobs are increasingly in demand of staff, and they are the areas where job growth is highest. Having a strong technological skillset will help young people get these jobs. Despite of the increase of STEM jobs, these are the careers where women are most underrepresented. As the world becomes increasingly reliant on technology, it is vital to teach girls digital literacy, to encourage them into STEM jobs, and push them into high paid, leadership roles where the development of our future belongs to them. Teaching girls tech also helps them get powerful, well-paid jobs that mean they don't have to rely on a husband, father or - in lot of scenarios - pimp to be able to survive.

Vulnerable young people are less likely than others to stay in school until college, so they need extra support outside of these structures in order to get an education and employment. Keeping vulnerable kids busy and returning for skills-based activities also means they are occupied and kept off the streets, less likely to get involved in violent groups or activities.



KampaBits, Uganda

WHAT: Teaching coding, computer and life skills to young people.

WHO FOR: Young vulnerable people in Kampala, hearing and D/deaf.

WHERE: Kampala, Uganda.

LESSON: Sexual health expert. Tech education. Opportunities for young people outside of schooling.

KampaBits teaches coding and development to vulnerable young people in Uganda's capital. They teach app development (working on Android because it's Africa's most popular platform), python and software development. On Fridays, they have a life skills class, which works with youth counsellor Eva to provide sessions on sexual health. The classes are taught in English with dapples of Luganda. All the software, and most of the job market, is in English.

They currently work with 90 students, with a 50/50 ratio of boys to girls. "They say these things are for boys so we encourage girls to give them higher chances," programme leader Laurence Ssengendo said. Lots of the participants have dropped out of school, so KampaBits finds alternative forms of education to empower them. The organisation also works to help get their students work placements after the course.

KampaBits is one of the few tech organisations in Uganda that encourages d/Deaf and disabled students. They have partnered with Light for the World, an international disability and development organisation, who are planning to teach both teachers and students sign language. An interpreter, Barry, stood alongside Eva.

For the session I sat in on, the computers were logged off. "Where they come from, there is a lot of domestic violence and drug abuse" Ssengendo told me, as he explained the importance of having these life skills classes. "Even when you give them the ICT skills, if you don't help them see the value of their life, you don't change their mindset."

The amount of misinformation the students are exposed to was clear. The phrase "it's normal" cropped up multiple times, so did the sign for "confused": left palm flat and facing upwards, right hand circling above.

Does a woman who uses a tampon lose her virginity? Can using a condom affect your fertility? Can using a condom give you cancer? Does having sex make it bigger? Does chewing khat make it bigger? Can it be made bigger?

When they asked about pulling out as a form of birth control, Eva said it wasn't just about pregnancy, but also HIV. "HIV is real and it is amongst us. You can't tell when you get it. If properly used, condoms are the only way to prevent it." She adds as a side note, "...or abstain, yeah." They'll tackle HIV head on in a later session.

Not all sexual health professionals are as open or encouraging as Eva. One boy said he went to a health centre for condoms but the counselor refused on religious grounds. "She was preaching to me, told me I was too young," he said. "What would happen if I wasn't brave enough, you know?" Eva said it's not the first time she's heard a story like this. "Some so-called councilors don't advise as expected. That person was wrong, that's not how things are done, I'm sorry."

This is a fairly ordinary sex ed lesson. But that in itself is extraordinary in a system that aims to shut down conversation. And they only feel comfortable because of the environment KampaBits has made for them; they're curious but it's unlikely they'd turn up every week just to talk about this stuff. They come for the coding, stay for the sex ed.

Ask Without Shame, Uganda

WHAT: Free anonymous app offering sexual health advice.

WHO FOR: Teenagers in East Africa.

WHERE: Based in Kampala but used across East Africa.

LESSON: Anonymous. Lack of judgement. Free, subtle download.

Ask Without Shame is an anonymous app that helps young people in East Africa learn about consent and sexual health. It also allows them to ask for guidance from sexual health professionals. Ask Without Shame debunks myths, tells people where to get contraception, and answers questions around topics that are traditionally taboo. They also conduct needs-based awareness and training in rural areas of Uganda, reaching some communities which will never have had any form of sex education, and where traditional gender roles are even more deeply ingrained than the rest of the country.

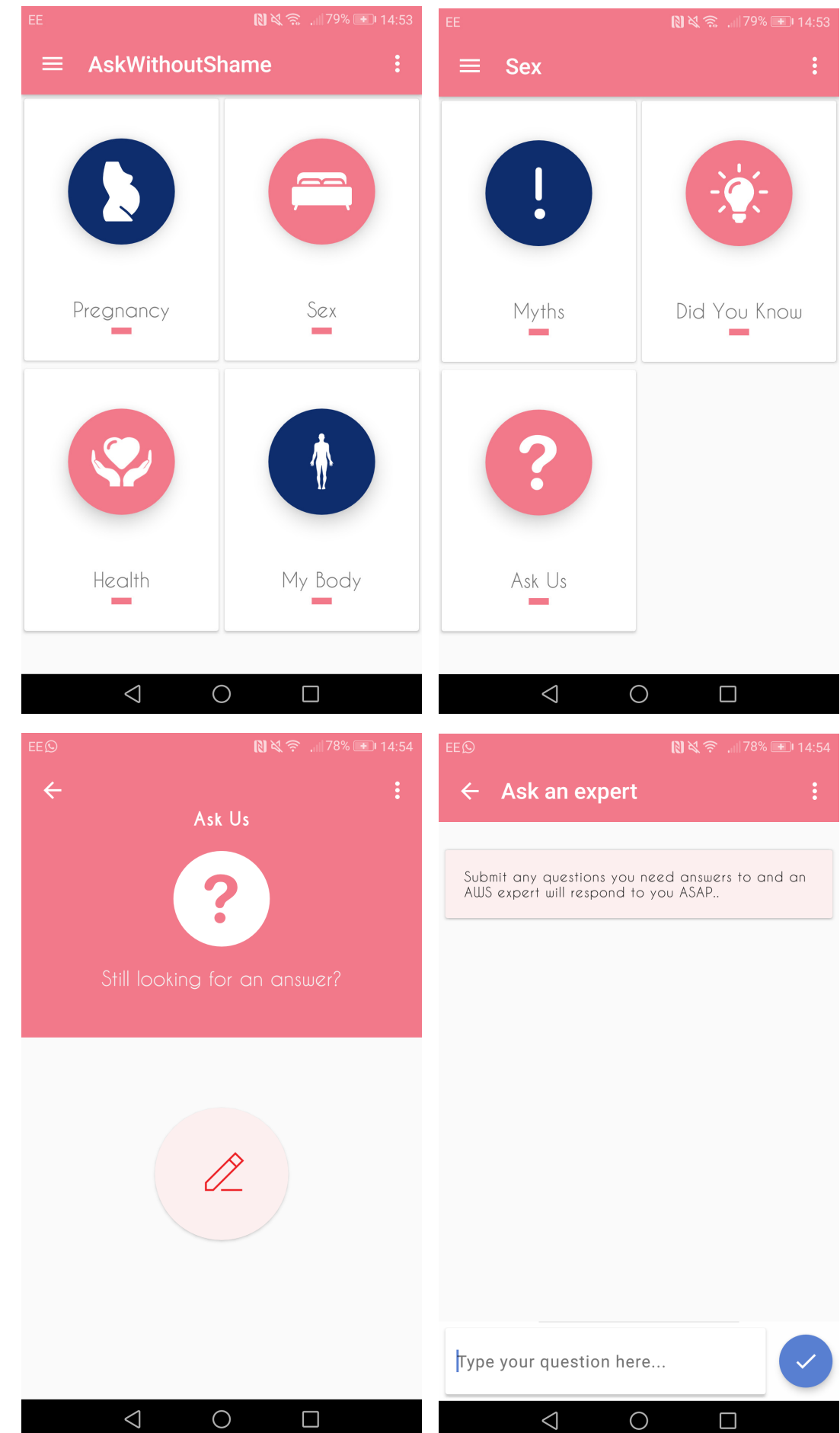
Ruth Namembezi founded the app. She lost both of her parents and her sister to HIV. If they had been taken to medical experts, they would have likely survived, but when her sister got ill, people thought it was witchcraft. Because of this tragic personal experience, Namembezi wants to break the taboos on sex.

The Android app is free and confidential, and is disguised so as to not draw attention to itself were someone to look through your phone.

The health professionals can also be contacted online, via text or WhatsApp, Africa's most popular instant messaging service

The company advertised the app by putting stickers in public transport across Uganda and to date, they have reached more than 25,000 users. Using only two smartphones, they answered over 50,000 questions in the first phase of the app's rollout. It has grown since then so the numbers are only increasing. Their information has saved both relationships and lives, prevented pregnancies and protected young people against HIV. It is a simple idea and a powerful tool.

When I visited their little office, they were preparing to open a health centre where people could book in appointments, to give people the choice to access the information digitally or in person. Taking away judgement is a vital part of Ask Without Shame's success; this app makes all the important information clear, with a safe, anonymous space to ask any further questions to experts.



Recommendations for: *consent education through technology*

Health care professionals

The amount of misinformation that spreads online, in playgrounds and at home is staggering. Well-trained health care professionals must be behind sexual health education services in order to counter this. Having well-informed, open and understanding experts will ensure young people have access to reliable information.

Benefits of anonymity

Even in situations designed to make people feel comfortable, there might be some questions a person won't want to ask. They might be shy of asking in front of a friend, or someone they fancy, or a family member, or they might take time to formulate the phrasing of the question. When an organisation offers anonymity, it provides an opportunity to step out of your body, not be afraid of any kind of reaction, and - when provided online or through an app- to ask safely in the comfort of your own home, on your own time, on your own terms. This is especially the case in societies where e.g. asking for condoms is looked down upon if you're young. I spoke to another app development team, based in Rwanda (they wanted to remain anonymous), that will soon offer the chance to order contraception to your pharmacy in a paper bag so that it isn't obvious what you're buying, as there is significant shame attached to the act of buying contraception.

Choice of digital or in-person

Some may be ashamed of accessing sexual health information in person. Others may not have access to the internet, or may only be able to use a shared computer where they wouldn't feel comfortable looking up topics related to sex. The more ways for people to access the information, the better.



Photo: Facebook/KampaBits

Self-defence

“I can defend myself. I am worth defending. I say no. I say no. No. No. No. No. No.”

- Girls in a No Means No class

It started and ended with girls fighting.

I did a tiny letter during the three months, emailing friends and family about some of the projects - like a private blog. My first was about my visit to Ujamaa and my last was about The Red Brigade. Across two different continents, young girls were learning how to pick and punch and elbow themselves out of a man's grasp. It was exhilarating and exhausting. I am so glad it is being taught, but I hate that it is necessary.

Whenever it is suggested that girls learn self-defense, the counterargument is that it should not be their responsibility to fight men off. I went in to these sessions with this concern, but having witnessed several classes, talked to trainers and participants and read more about it, I am certain that teaching girls self-defence is only a good thing. It does not put pressure on them to fight back. It simply equips them with the tools to be able to do so. It gives them confidence. It teaches boys that girls are strong, that girls are not passive. And it teaches them they cannot just reach out and grab what they want. In essence, teaching girls self-defence can teach boys fear, which I might suggest is not a wholly bad thing. As the great novelist Margaret Atwood wrote: “Men are afraid women will laugh at them. Women are afraid men will kill them.”

Ujamaa went even further than this by teaching boys about positive masculinity. They teach the students how to intervene and how to stop an attack, both through words and actions. They taught them what to do, not just what not to do. Wherever I went and whatever classes I visited for this project, there always seemed a balance of what approach you take: do you teach the potential victims or the potential perpetrators? Ujamaa taught both.



Parcham, India

WHAT: Self-defence.

WHO FOR: Secondary schools.

WHERE: Lucknow, India.

LESSON: Female empowerment. Confidence. Active rather than passive.

A woman is raped in India every twenty minutes. In Lucknow, Northern India, a group of survivors of sexual assault have decided to fight back. They teach self-defence skills under the campaign “Mission One Million”, hoping to teach one million girls how to fight. They also provide legal assistance to survivors of rape and acid attacks.

I visited their work in a school in Lucknow, as 60 girls in neat pleated uniforms gathered on a patch of grass outside. They all squatted, tucking their skirts in so the biting ants wouldn't climb up. Afreen Khan, one of the founders of The Red Brigade Lucknow, led the session. She guided the students through various moves to defend themselves should the need arise. With Deepak, one of the few boys in The Red Brigade, she showed them how to throw your weight behind a punch.

Usha Vishwakarma started Red Brigade in 2011 when a man attempted to rape her. She was able to kick him off and run away, but she was shaken. She got a group of girls together in her town in Uttar Pradesh and they started learning self-defence. They knew it wasn't their responsibility to defend themselves, but no one seemed to be telling the boys to change their behaviour. In the eight years since, Red Brigade have taught almost 20,000 young people how to physically defend themselves.

The team leading the session got out some gym equipment and the girls got to take turns drawing their arms back like a bow, and throwing themselves at the instructors.

First how to slap, then how to punch, then how to knee a guy in the groin. Hands clasped behind his neck, one foot forward, then swing the other with everything you've got. Punching: arm back, swing, heavy contact. One, two, three, four, five. The repetition creates a muscle memory that can help you react on instinct, and it tells your brain that you have the ability to fight.

At the end of the day it's not about using the skills; it is about the confidence they give. It is about being able to walk home after school knowing that you are strong, something most of the girls - and to be honest, most girls - are not taught they are or are allowed to be. It is about power. It is also - for the men who have been hunted down by the Red Brigade and beaten up - about fear.

The headteacher gave us samosas and sweets afterwards. She asked me what I thought of the session and I said I thought it should be compulsory everywhere. She agreed. She said it's made her students smarter, faster and bolder. “They are seen as body only. But this has made my girls strong.” I asked what else she thought we could do in schools to prevent sexual assault. She said her girls knew what to do now, but it wasn't their responsibility. They're constantly being told what to do and how to be. “Our girls are taught too much. Now it's the boys' turn to be taught how to behave.”



I CAN
DEFEND
MYSELF.
I AM
WORTH
DEFENDING.

Ujamaa Africa & No Means No, Kenya

WHAT: Self-defence and deconstruction of toxic masculinity.

WHO FOR: Secondary school children.

WHERE: Nairobi, Kenya.

LESSON: Empowerment. Intervention. Promotion of positive masculinity.

Ujamaa's focus is on the prevention of assault. In a school on the edge of Nairobi, girls learn self-defence while boys deconstruct masculinity and talk about how to intervene if they see an assault. Ujamaa work with No Means No to provide their classes, with the sessions taking place within school time and on the school curriculum, but run independently. Ujamaa report that in the areas they work, cases of rape are cut by half. "This is the first time anyone's proven you can prevent rape with a simple, low-cost intervention," Dr. Jake Sinclair told Reuters Health in 2015. "It's like a vaccine."

The classes are divided by gender. The girls' classes are focused on empowerment. They learn to understand the strength of their own bodies and how they can use them, if need be, as a weapon. Areas of male vulnerability: groin, throat, eyes. It's a mixture of practice and theory, with the last few classes teaching them core self-defence skills. It's never suggested that it's their responsibility to fight; the teachers say they can choose to fight if they feel it's an option, but make it clear

that it's not always a possibility. Instead, the class is arming them with self-confidence and giving them a set of tools that could, in certain circumstances, save their lives. The class is taught in a way that means girls get to be bold and physical with their voices and bodies in a way that feels incredibly freeing - and fun. It's serious stuff but the room is full of laughter as they twist their arms and practice punching.

Nextdoor, the boys relearn core moral values by unpicking cycles of force. They look at violence as a cry for help amidst powerlessness rather than a sign of strength. The class is in no way patronising or aggressive. It is simple, honest and open. They talk about pressures, expectations and choice. They are taught how to intervene if they encounter an attack or a case of harassment - be it through speaking up, getting in the way or running to get help.

One of the most effective techniques is that they taught to think as if each girl could be their sister or mother. In a culture that puts so much emphasis on the value of family, it seems to really land.

At the end of the class, the teacher leads the girls in a chant. It goes on for about a minute, the words clear and defiant and powered with rage and hope. Arms wild, voices loud, they repeat:

NO.
NO.
I SAID NO.
I SAID NO.
I AM STRONG.
I AM STRONG.
GET AWAY FROM ME.
GET AWAY FROM ME.
I CAN DEFEND MYSELF.
I CAN DEFEND MYSELF.
I AM WORTH DEFENDING.
I AM WORTH DEFENDING.

They shout at the top of their lungs. Fifty girls in their stripy uniforms, all acutely aware of the possibility of what someone could do to their bodies. Learning how to best protect themselves. Learning how valuable they are.

Recommendations for: *consent education through self-defence*

Ditch shame, teach pride

Throughout their lives, girls and women are taught to be ashamed of their bodies. Self-defence can counter this by getting girls to understand and enjoy their own bodies. It is a thrill to learn how to fight. It teaches them about their own potential strength, about the joy of using their limbs and about the fun that can be had in learning an active skill. Changing the perception of women from passive to active also works to make boys aware of girls' strength.

Teach how to intervene

It is not only about altering boys' own behaviour but calling out that of others. If boys can be taught the impact of rape, perhaps they can be taught not to laugh at rape jokes made by their friends. Teach them how to use their actions positively rather than leaping into a fight. Teach them how to de-escalate a situation. Teach them about the bystander effect, and safely encourage positive intervention.

Deconstruct cycles of violence

Unpick the spectrum of violence and teach students to understand consequences. Talk about trauma and cycles of violence. Talk about why people turn to violence and what alternatives there are. Get into the psychology of it so that their emotions don't seem so alien.

Teach positive masculinity

The phrase "toxic masculinity" is everywhere, but less talked about are examples of positive masculinity. Don't just tell boys what they should not be doing, tell them what they can do to make a positive impact. Widen the idea of what a "good man" is, and alter their expectations. As I have noted, mentors and coaches play into this too; having an idol you can emulate can give lots of examples of positive behaviour.

Give boys a safe space to talk

Give boys a safe space to ask questions. Make them feel included rather than that they are the enemy. Respond positively to their suggestions and concerns. Make them feel valued. Never make them feel like they are failing at being men. Unpick gender roles and expectations. If the confusion and fear of growing up can be caught early, and be transformed into respect and knowledge rather than anger, boys will grow up e.g. understanding that women have a choice whether to be with them or not, rather than immediately turning to violence or repulsion when their advances are rejected.



10 recommendations

In Sven Lindqvist's extraordinary book, *Exterminate All The Brutes*, he connects European imperialism to the Holocaust, tracing ideas throughout history and examining their impact on individuals. It is devastating. He frames the book with four sentences, repeated at the start and at the end. He writes:

being taught too much," she said, "always being taught how to behave. It is now the responsibility of the parents to teach the sons. How to be a good man." Yet she also knew that as a headteacher of a girls school, she had to do all she could to protect her students. So she invited The Red Brigade to teach her girls how to be strong, and how

“You already know enough. So do I. It is not knowledge we lack. What is missing is the courage to understand what we know and how to draw conclusions.”

We already know that there are horrific instances of sexual violence happening all over the world every day. We already know that they happen to men, women, non-binary and trans people on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. We already know that they happen to children in January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November and December. “It is not knowledge we lack.” We already know.

At the school where The Red Brigade were doing a self-defence session, the headteacher explained why she had invited them. She knew that the emphasis for stopping sexual assault was too often put on girls, that they were being taught not to be raped rather than boys being taught not to rape. “The girls are

to have courage. She knew that would be vital for them to get by. “This is what I can do in my own arena,” she said.

If we each try to tackle sexual violence and inequality in our own arenas, the world will be a better and safer place. Based on what I have witnessed, I have listed ten recommendations of best practice for teaching sexual consent. I hope that these conclusions can serve as solutions, and that they might be useful to someone considering what they can do in their own arena. There is no excuse; it is not knowledge we lack. We must have courage, and try to protect the next generation. They are worth defending.



Red Brigade Lucknow
&
Radio Mirchi 98.3

Safe Women
Safe Lucknow

Fight Against
A Voice for

1/ Skills-based play

A successful programme needs a skill that participants want to improve at. It will make them want to come back. Sometimes the consent education I saw was a core part of the class (as in Tackle Africa’s football sessions), other times it was an addition (as in Parcham’s football sessions). But it was always the skill that hooked them in and made them want to come back next time, with the education tacked on as an extra. Having an end goal, such as an end of season match, can also help drive a programme through to completion.

The best sessions I saw - in whatever form of education - were the ones where laughter was frequent, where the students felt comfortable enough to giggle with their coaches or teachers, and to ask questions knowing that they would only ever be laughed with, never laughed at. Laughter helps bond a team, and people will want to return if they are friends with their teammates.

2/ Mentors

Informed, inspirational and trustworthy mentors and coaches are vital for successful programmes where participants feel safe and enriched. The coach is mentor, idol, and often parental figure. They play a significant role in how comfortable their players or students feel. The coach must be non-judgmental, trustworthy, good at listening and adept at telling when something is wrong with one of their pupils. They must be well trained in sexual health, and know how to best support difficult cases.

Students often feel more comfortable talking to people they feel they can relate to, such as someone who went to their school a few years ago, or someone they admire and want to be like, or someone similar in age to them. Because of this, it is useful to have a designated member of staff or coach for a programme, so that they are separated from, say, the English teacher. It may also be useful to have mentors of different genders for students to talk to. However it is more important that a teacher - of whatever gender or sexuality - makes everyone aware that they can talk to them about anything they are concerned or curious about.

3/ Include parents

Get the parents on board. When I was travelling, one common issue when setting up a programme was men not wanting their wives or daughters to taking part e.g. participating in what’s considered a man’s sport. By encouraging men to watch matches, inviting them to family days or helping them see the benefits (for themselves as well as the women) in the sessions, they gradually changed their views and largely began to support the initiatives.

If parents are resistant, talk to them privately about it and try to quell their concerns. This may particularly be the case in conservative or religious communities, so focus on the benefits to their communities.

4/ Deconstruct masculinity

Unpick the spectrum of violence and teach an understanding of consequences. Talk about trauma and cycles of violence. Talk about why people turn to violence. If they understand the impact of actions, they might think more about their knee-jerk responses, such as what jokes they laugh at, or how they treat a girl.

Give examples of positive masculinity. Don’t just tell boys what they should not be doing, tell them what they can do to make a positive impact. Widen the idea of what a “good man” is, and alter their expectations. As I have noted, mentors and coaches play a big role; having an idol you can emulate can give lots of examples of positive behaviour.

5/ Teach intervention

Encourage leadership rather than a mentality of following the crowd. This language gives them something to be proud of, to be a representative of.

It is not only about altering their own behaviour but calling out that of others. If boys can be taught the impact of rape, perhaps they can be taught not to laugh at rape jokes made by their friends. Teach them how to use their actions positively rather than leaping into a fight. Teach them how to de-escalate a situation. Teach them about the bystander effect, and safely encourage positive intervention.

6/ Localise

Each programme requires personalisation to its target area. For example in Rwanda, Shooting Touch found they had one team with too many HIV+ women, so they were getting very tired very quickly. When the coach found out, she swiftly swapped the teams round without any fuss, and thanked them for being open with her. A programme must always be adapting and aware of the local's needs, sensitivities and vulnerabilities.

It is important to have locals as project providers. Part of what drew such big responses out of the audience of *Are We There Yet?* was the way the cast leapt between local languages. It ingrained the cast in with the audience, making the pupils feel seen and heard. Just as Boal said, forum theatre - or versions of it - works best when made and performed by people who understand the ideas discussed. Lagnet had adapted some parts of the play to work better for their community, offering real examples of situations students might find themselves in.

Go directly to the community spaces, rather than just waiting for people to come to you. By going to the schools and marketplaces, Lagnet managed to engage hundreds of people in tricky discussions, without them having to pay. It was much cheaper for Lagnet to go to them, and ensured them a far bigger audience. Often it is not the ones most keen to take part in the programme who need to take part most.

Localisation applies both to how you reach people and how you present the programme. For sexual health apps used in conservative areas, it may be worth designing it in a way that the app's function is disguised.

One aspect I have not explored as much as I would have liked to is LGBTQI+ sexual education. This is primarily because of the areas I was exploring, but I am keen to do further research in this topic. Again this lends itself to localisation, being wary of laws, whilst acknowledging that in whatever context, some of those children will be gay. To deny children an education of their bodies is to cause them a lot of harm. It causes shame, embarrassment, and leads to high rates of depression and suicide and suicide among young LGBTQI+ people. The best option is always to give young people information.

7/ Accessible health professionals

The amount of misinformation that spreads online, in playgrounds and at home is staggering. Well-trained health care professionals must be behind sexual health education services in order to counter this. When the new UK curriculum comes into effect, it is vital that teachers get sufficient training.

8/ Incentive

Shooting Touch provide healthcare for the whole family so long as participants turn up to a certain percentage of sessions. I used to go to a youth forum for the pizza. An incentive can be financial or in kind, but it can be a good way to ensure your students return. (I'd also suggest that friendship, fun and the desire to improve are incentives for a sports or skill-based team).

9/ Non-judgemental space

By giving boys a safe space to ask questions, they feel included, and by responding positively to their ideas and concerns, they feel valued. Much of the rise of incel and violent male behaviour comes from loneliness, feeling undervalued, the pressure to follow traditional male values, and the feeling that they are failing at them. If the confusion and fear of growing up can be caught early, and be transformed into respect and knowledge rather than anger, boys will grow up e.g. understanding that women have a choice whether to be with them or not, rather than immediately turning to violence or repulsion when their advances are rejected. A safe space also offers them an opportunity to get guidance from sexual health experts, rather than getting misinformation online, or simply learning from porn. In fact, one of the lessons with No Means No goes over porn with boys, unpicking reality and expectations. It must be done in a way that engages rather than patronises, but done well, it can quell fears and encourage understanding and healthy relationships.

Explore alternative opinions rather than shut them down. Lagnet always responded positively towards anyone who spoke during their shows, thanking them for their input and - vitally - making them seem cool in front of their friends. It didn't matter if someone got some information wrong; the cast simply steered them to the right answer without making anyone feel ashamed. There is a lot of misinformation around sex, so it is important to know how to deal with it, rather than expecting everyone to already know the facts.

10/ Teach pride

Throughout their lives, girls and women are taught to be ashamed of their bodies. Teach pride instead. Teach strength. Teach the joy of using your limbs. Teach the fun of learning an active skill. Teach the pleasure of a healthy relationship. Teach the power of being a leader. Teach ambition and drive and kindness. Change the perception of women from passive to active, and celebrate it. Teach respect. Ditch shame, teach pride.



Thank you



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