



Group Development Pakistan

Case Study

The power of sports to promote gender equality!*

A major challenge faced by Group Development Pakistan (GDP) in the E-11 community where a Non-Formal Education (NFE) center has been established under this project, is overcoming traditional taboos whereby sending girls to school is not a very common practice. The demographic in this community is particularly conservative and strict gender-based segregation is the norm.

Initially, when mothers from the community were mobilized regarding the importance of education and child welfare, they stated that their major concern was the fact that girls were not to associate with boys, because it was frowned upon in their society. The idea of girls and boys sitting together in class meant that many girls would not be able to attend school. Hence, two separate NFE tented units were established, for the boys and girls each. Strict segregation was observed, and the girls did not associate with the boys and vice versa; during recess, children avoided contact with the opposite sex and usually played cricket or other games amongst themselves.

Every Friday, after school, a cricket match was scheduled for the boys because they really enjoyed playing whilst the girls watched from afar. One Friday, after witnessing an exciting match, one of the girls, Zarmeena, expressed a desire to play as well. As there was no second bat or ball, she was made a part of the boys' team and was allowed to play the innings. The boys did not hesitate to allow her

to play with them and watching her, other girls also joined the team.

Within no time, a team of 6 girls and 6 boys took shape, and a splendid cricket match took place. This was the first time in the history of the NFE center, that there was no gender segregation and each child exercised their 'Right to Play' without any discrimination and within healthy boundaries.

*Names have been changed in accordance with GDP child safeguarding standards