

TAKING THE RIGHT TO PLAY TO ETHIOPIA

Introduction

Focus

In this *News in Review* story, Canadian Olympian Clara Hughes visits Ethiopia to view the impact of Right To Play programs. Although she was uncertain what to expect when she first began her trip, she came away from Ethiopia with a new respect for its people and for the power of sport and play.

Further Research

For more information on Right To Play, visit the Web site at www.righttoplay.com.



Sections marked with this symbol indicate content suitable for younger viewers.

Why would anyone need the “right” to play? After all, if you grew up in Canada you were likely able to go to the local park, play in the gym at school, play outside at recess or on a school sports team. You may even have been fortunate enough to get to play in an organized sport like gymnastics or soccer. It is also very likely that you have been able to play with games and toys with your friends and family.

But not all children have the same opportunities. Children born in parts of the world ravaged by war have no playing fields. Landmines are often planted in conflict areas and can maim or kill children who mistakenly play in these areas. In some fields, abandoned army vehicles and used ammunition and artillery make it impossible for children to do something as simple as kick a ball around. In the worst cases, conflict zones can contain mass graves often referred to as killing fields. Children living in such areas engage in little sport or play.

Furthermore, millions of children have been displaced from their homes because of war, famine, or drought and become refugees. Often having to walk many kilometres to reach a refugee camp, these children and their families have very few possessions and suffer from extreme poverty and poor health. Conditions within the camps are often quite dismal and violent, leaving little opportunity for play.

The Right To Play organization is trying to change this by bringing sport and play programs to some of the poorest nations in the world. Right To

Play works with high-profile athletes like Canadian Olympian Clara Hughes to raise awareness about the importance of uniting people through sport and creating a global community. Athlete Ambassadors raise awareness and funds for Right To Play programs and visit the countries where such programs are being run. Right To Play also trains local and international volunteers as coaches to maintain the programs when the Athlete Ambassadors return to their home countries.

And it is not just about fun. Right To Play uses games and sport to educate children about HIV/AIDS transmission and about healthy living. Joey Cheek, a speed skater and Olympic medal winner from the U.S., visited Zambia in April 2006 as a Right To Play Athlete Ambassador. He was able to witness what school is like for many children of the world. He visited the district of Chawama, where there was no electricity in the schoolrooms and as many as 70 children in a classroom smaller than the size of his own bedroom. At one school he visited, over 200 children were orphans, having lost their parents to either HIV/AIDS or wars in other countries.

On the other hand, because the children he visited had participated in Right To Play programs, they could recite all the ways HIV can be transmitted. This means that in the future these children may have a lower chance of contracting the virus themselves. If that turns out to be the case, then Right To Play and its supporters will truly have something to cheer about.

To Consider

1. With a partner or small group, list 10 different sports that people play in Canada.

2. Where do people play sports in your town or city?

3. Why do you think people play sports?

4. What do you personally believe are the benefits of sport?

5. How do your parents, your school, and your community encourage play and participation in sport?

6. How would your life be different if you were unable to play sports and games?

7. Do you believe children everywhere should have the right to play? Provide three reasons for your answer.

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Video Review

As you view the video, respond to the questions using the lines provided.

Quote

"Look After Yourself. Look After One Another." — slogan from Right To Play Web site

1. Describe how Clara Hughes felt at the beginning of her trip to Ethiopia.

2. What are living conditions like for many people in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia? Be specific.

3. How did Clara Hughes come to be involved in Right To Play?

4. Hili Yesus Yetuyeh is the 17-year-old Ethiopian featured in this *News in Review* video. Describe the following:

(a) how he came to be handicapped

(b) how he came to be involved with Right To Play

(c) the impact Right To Play has had on his life

(d) his future plans

5. Ten-year-old polio survivor Muktar Gameda had a profound impact on Clara Hughes. She described Muktar as having "pure courage." What do you think "pure courage" means, and why did Hughes describe Muktar this way?

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 **Clara Hughes**

Further Research

To learn more about Canada's Olympic efforts, consider a visit to the Web site of the Canadian Olympic Committee at www.olympic.ca, and for information about the Special Olympics, visit www.specialolympics.ca.

Canada has many talented athletes. But Clara Hughes is the only Canadian who has won medals at both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games. She is only the fourth athlete in Olympic history to do so.

The reason she was able to win medals at both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games is because she excels in two separate sports: cycling and speed skating. She earned two bronze medals for cycling at the 1996 Summer Games. She earned her first Olympic medal for speed skating at the 2002 Winter Games. At the 2006 Olympic Winter Games she won both gold and silver medals in speed skating.

Clara Hughes was born in Winnipeg on September 27, 1972. She grew up playing a variety of sports, including ringette, hockey, volleyball, track and field, soccer, and softball. Her Olympic dream began in 1988 when she was 16 years old. She had been watching the Olympic Winter Games on television and fell in love with speed skating. She told her family that one day she would represent Canada in that same sport.

It very quickly became evident that her prediction would come true. In 1988 she began speed skating, and in her first year of competition earned a silver medal at the National Championships. Two years later, she began cycling, and it was this sport that led her to her first Olympic competition. Although she is an accomplished cyclist—with over 100 victories in cycling, including two Olympic bronze medals—speed skating is her first love.

In 2000 she shifted her focus back to speed skating. Since that time she has become one of the top long-distance skaters in the world, winning the World

Championship in speed skating in 2003 and 2004, and a gold medal at the 2006 Olympic Games in Turin, Italy.

Hughes believes that her involvement in sports helped save her from becoming involved in some bad choices as a teenager. On the Sport for Life Web site, Hughes explains how watching Olympic athletes perform inspired her to change the way she was living her life.

“When I was young, I became involved with kids who smoked and got into a lot of trouble. I was swayed in a destructive direction, and sport is the one thing that pulled me out off this path. Sport had a profound, life-altering effect on me, and I would like to share my journey with young people. Without the examples of the Olympic athletes I saw as a youngster, my life would be very different. Becoming an athlete gave me awareness, and made me change the way in which I lived, my goals and values.”

Source: Sport for Life (www.sportforlife.ca/teamsfl/clarahughes.asp) – accessed January 24, 2007

Hughes isn't only an elite athlete. She is also a humanitarian and a philanthropist. In 2003 she became an Athlete Ambassador for Right To Play. Her strong beliefs in the positive power of sport and play and a desire to increase awareness of the organization led her to donate \$10 000 to Right To Play when she won her gold medal at the 2006 Olympic Winter Games. She challenged Canadian individuals and organizations to donate as well. And they did. By the end of 2006, Canadians had donated almost \$500 000.

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How It Works

Quote

"This is one of the greatest causes I have ever seen! Right To Play is using the incredible power of sport and play to help children who are affected in refugee camps, affected by war, and orphaned by HIV/AIDS." — Wayne Gretzky, Right To Play Athlete Ambassador and Hockey Great – Right To Play Web site

Right To Play (www.righttoplay.com) is an international humanitarian organization trying to create a healthier and safer world for children. It uses athletes to help set up sport and play programs in some of the poorest areas of the world. Right To Play hopes to improve the lives of children by promoting development, health, and peace.

The organization has programs in over 20 countries, including Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, and Zambia. Right To Play trains local and international volunteers to implement programs in local communities. Right To Play estimates that, in 2005, its programs reached approximately 500 000 children and youth on a weekly basis.

Right To Play also works with Olympic, Paralympic, and professional athletes to raise awareness of the organization and to help in fundraising efforts. The athletes donate their time and effort and inspire children through their example. Over 50 Canadian athletes are involved with Right To Play, including Wayne Gretzky, Donovan Bailey, Daniel Igali, Silken Laumann, Hayley Wickenheiser, and Clara Hughes.

The Programs

Two main programs are run by Right To Play. The first is called SportWorks. This program uses sport and play programs to promote the healthy physical, social, and emotional development of children. Local youth are trained as coaches. SportWorks projects target

refugee children and communities, as well as communities seeking to help large numbers of former child soldiers.

The second program is called SportHealth. This program also focuses on sport to promote the healthy development of children but it also uses sport to mobilize communities around key health issues. For example, SportHealth programs have been used to support vaccination campaigns and HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programs.

All Right To Play programs are designed to have the following impacts:

- Healthier, educated children
- Empowered individuals and communities
- Safer, more peaceful communities
- Improved health and healthier lifestyle behaviours

A Brief History of Right To Play

Right To Play was originally called Olympic Aid and was created in 1992 by the Olympic organizing committee in preparation for the 1994 Olympic Winter Games. Olympic athletes were chosen to assist in fundraising efforts during the Games. These funds would then be directed to partners such as Red Cross and Save the Children to help people in war-torn countries and areas of distress.

The lead Athlete Ambassador for Olympic Aid was four-time gold medalist Johann Olav Koss. He donated a large part of his winnings to Olympic Aid and challenged fellow athletes and the public to donate money for each medal won. His challenge was remarkably successful. Over US\$18-million was raised and used to build schools in Eritrea, a hospital in Sarajevo, and to support refugees and disabled children

in other designated areas of the world.

In 1996, Olympic Aid formed a partnership with UNICEF (www.unicef.org) and raised millions of dollars prior to and during the Olympic Games in Atlanta. The funds were used to vaccinate over 12 million children and one million women. This, in and of

itself, is a very significant accomplishment, but equally so is the fact that the vaccination program resulted in two truces. In both Afghanistan and the Kurdish region in northern Iraq, all fighting stopped so that UNICEF staff could administer the vaccinations.

In early 2003, Olympic Aid evolved into Right To Play.

Reflection

With a partner or small group, copy the chart below into your notebook and write down as many specific examples as you can. A couple of examples have been provided to help you get started.

Positive Impacts of Sport and Play	Specific Examples
Healthier, educated children	- less depression and anxiety
Empowered individuals and communities	- higher levels of self-confidence
Safer, more peaceful communities	- teaches conflict resolution and fair play
Improved health and healthier lifestyle behaviours	- improved HIV/AIDS awareness

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Ethiopia: A Profile

Did you know . . .

During the civil war in Somalia (2007), Ethiopian soldiers entered the country to support the national government and defeat the rebels. They have since left Somalia.

Ethiopia is the focus of this *News in Review* story. Ethiopia is Africa's oldest independent country. Apart from a five-year occupation by Mussolini's Italy, it has never been colonized. Ethiopia is located in the northeastern part of the African continent and is one of Africa's poorest countries. Almost two-thirds of the population is illiterate.

Although Ethiopia has not been plagued by the conflict and war that has occurred in other parts of Africa, it has

suffered from periods of harsh dictatorship, droughts, and famine. Perhaps the country's most difficult period occurred in the 1970s and 1980s when a combination of drought, famine, war, and poor government policies brought millions to the brink of starvation.

To gain a greater understanding of Ethiopia, review the comparison chart below and then answer the questions that follow.

Category	Ethiopia	Canada
Size	1.1 million sq km	9.9 million sq km
Population	74.2 million (2005)	32 million
Languages spoken	Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali	English, French
Average income	US\$160 (2006)	US\$32 600 (2006)
Life expectancy	46 years for men 49 years for women	77 years for men 82 years for women
Economy	Agriculture (which is often affected by drought)	Manufacturing and natural resources

Source: Information taken from BBC News Country Profiles at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1198865.stm and http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1072164.stm Information accessed January 18, 2007.

Activity

1. Compare the size and population of Canada and Ethiopia. Which country would be more crowded? What impact might this have on daily life?
2. Compare the difference in the average income. Record at least five points to describe the impact this difference would have on the day-to-day lives of Ethiopian citizens.
3. Why do you think there is such a disparity in the life expectancy of Ethiopians and Canadians?

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Reading: True Meaning of Hope and Courage

The following was written by Clara Hughes after her trip to Ethiopia and reprinted with permission from Right

To Play. Complete the pre-reading activity before you read the article. Then complete the post-reading activity.

Pre-Reading Strategy

1. With a partner or small group write down everything you know about Ethiopia. For example, where it is, what the climate, living conditions, and the people might be like. If you have no idea, then do your best to make an educated guess for each of these points.
2. Based on your knowledge or assumptions about Ethiopia, explain whether or not you would want to take a trip there. Include three reasons for your answer.

The True Meaning of Hope and Courage By Clara Hughes

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, May 30, 2006
— On my way home from Ethiopia, waiting for my plane in Rome, I realized this was my first time travelling to Europe and it was not for sport. It felt strange not to have my bike or speed skates with me.

This trip was different in many ways. Soon I would meet some of the faces on a news documentary I saw the morning of my Olympic race some three months prior. Even though these were not the exact children, the difficulties they face in their day-to-day lives mirror the ones in the documentary.

Though excited about the trip, I couldn't help but feel a sense of anxiety and fear creeping into my consciousness. Why would I feel a sense of fear when talking about children? Because I knew these young people would hold life experience beyond the realm of my imagination. The state of poverty, disability, and stigma these kids face in their daily lives were all foreign to my privileged existence in the Western world.

Even still, I had to go and meet some

of these kids to really understand; to strengthen the desire to help them in any way I can.

Ethiopia's Bustling Capital

Ethiopia's capital city of Addis Ababa is home to over four million people. The impact of seeing such rampant poverty was so strong for me. It felt like being hit by a truck. I couldn't help but ask myself over and over, how can we have so much, and millions have so little?

A constant flow of people poured out into the streets as our bus navigated us from program after program all week.

The individuals overseeing the Right To Play program in Addis Ababa were generous to allow us athletes—seven in total from five different countries—into the realities of their work with an array of children. They shared with us stories of where the children came from and how the programs have shifted their lives. It seemed like a dream to me to go into the gated areas where the children played.

The Red Ball Challenge

I was taught the Red Ball Challenge from a group of Right To Play local coaches. Even though they were all in their mid-teens, they had the confidence and professionalism beyond their years. I've taken part in many "team building" programs run in the U.S. and Canada and can say that these young coaches, locals from Addis Ababa who all had their own stories to tell, outshone the best North America has to offer the corporate world in terms of motivation and lessons in team building.

They taught us the meaning of the colours of the Olympic rings: red that represents the mind, yellow the spirit, green health, blue peace, and black physical fitness. All of the balls are easy for the children to understand and they can easily associate with them. They represent something that the children go through every day. The colours directly relate to the relationship with their society that they experience. The balls have been advantages for the children in changing their minds and their bodies. . . .

One of the beautiful young coaches had us captivated, sharing with us: "the red ball is special because we have a special gift in our mind. The mind is a very good thing and the red ball helps develop our mind. It helps us to be creative, and even in your sports you have to think about how you are going to win a certain game or defeat certain opponents. In order to do that you must always work your mind. This game helps our thinking and our creativity."

The Beauty of Ethiopians

Each day in Ethiopia was filled with so much. What stands out the most is the opportunities that Right To Play's sport and play programs give to the children. It was clear that without Right To Play, the disadvantaged and disabled children

we visited would not have the same opportunities to evolve, change, gain confidence, experience a sense of security and belonging. I saw it again and again with all of the kids that we worked with.

For me, what shone the brightest was their courage. That's the incredible thing. The children and coaches we met were not thinking about what they don't have and what they cannot do—they just made it work. Seeing this, I wish and hope that Canadians at home can see it too and be as inspired as I am inspired by their beauty and courage.

We have a lot to learn from them. This is humanity and we are a part of it. I wish everyone could see and experience this. We need to feel responsible and accountable, especially to the young people it is the human condition. It is not just in Ethiopia, this is only the tip of the iceberg.

The Importance of Right To Play

What we witnessed with the Right To Play programs in Ethiopia is clear evidence [of] what sport and play are doing. It was a joyful environment. What a gift, what an incredible gift. Hope is such an important thing. There is despair and hard times, but there is also hope. Right To Play is giving this sense of hope.

I will never, ever forget what I saw and heard and who I met . . . everything that I was so gifted to experience in Ethiopia. This is true inspiration I hope to bring back into my world and share with others.

I want everyone to understand the urgency and importance of the mission of Right To Play: to create a healthier and safer world for children through the power of sport and play. This is far more important than any gold medal—even an Olympic gold medal.

Further Research

To learn something about the history and natural beauty of Ethiopia, visit the official government tourism site of the Ministry of Tourism for Ethiopia at www.tourismethiopia.org.

Post-reading Strategy

1. Take another look at the answer you gave for the first question in the pre-reading strategy. How has your impression of Ethiopia changed after reading Hughes's article? Take a moment to update your written answer.
2. Describe how Hughes's feelings about Ethiopia changed from the beginning of her trip to the end.
3. Now that you know more about Ethiopia and its people, complete a short two-column organizer in your notes. One column should be headed "Similarities between Canada and Ethiopia" and the other "Differences between Canada and Ethiopia."

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Activity: Making a Difference

Quote

"I believe in the power of sport and play to change lives." — Catriona Le May Doan, Right To Play Athlete Ambassador and two-time Olympic gold medalist (speed skating). Do you agree with this statement? Explain.

Play and sport do matter. Even here in Canada, where most children have access to safe play areas and many sport activities, the Canadian Council on Learning (www.clc-cca.ca) believes that children are not spending enough time playing. In a report released in 2006, the Council argues that kids need at least 45 minutes of spontaneous play every day. This is in addition to any organized sports that children play. The Council believes that spontaneous play is crucial to the healthy development of children.

But as you've learned in this *News in Review* story, many children have limited access to safe play areas for sports and games. Right To Play is working toward changing this. The Athlete Ambassadors working with the organization are giving their time and money to help Right To Play achieve its goals. Over 50 Canadian athletes are ambassadors for Right To Play.

Your Task

Write a letter to one of the Canadian athletes listed below. All of these individuals are Athlete Ambassadors, with a page dedicated to their accomplishments on the Right To Play Web site. You may choose to visit the athlete's page before you draft your letter. If so, visit Right To Play at www.righttoplay.com and click on "Meet our Athletes" from the "Our Athletes" drop-down menu at the top of the home page.

Your letter should include the following elements:

- a greeting
- an introductory section to tell the athlete who you are and why you are writing
- a section that explains how you feel about the athlete's accomplishments and work with Right To Play
- a section that explains why you feel play and sport are important
- a conclusion that invites a response from the person you are writing and thanks the athlete for making a difference in the lives of others
- a signature for your letter and a return address (this can be the school address)

Your teacher will decide whether you should e-mail your letter to the athlete or send it through the post office. (The address is on the Web site.)

Lindsay Alcock – Skeleton
Susan Auch – Speed Skating
Donovan Bailey – Athletics, 100m
Jasper Blake – Triathlon
Jennifer Botterill – Hockey
Veronica Brenner – Aerials
Emily Brydon – Alpine Skiing
Bryan Crawford – Football
Charmaine Crooks – Athletics, 800m
Arne Dankers – Speed Skating
Deidra Dionne – Aerials
Sharon Donnelly – Triathlon
Nikki Dryden – Swimming
Andrew Ference – Hockey
Wayne Gretzky – Hockey

Kristina Groves – Speed Skating
Andrew Haley – Swimming
Charmaine Hooper – Soccer
Matt Huang – Swimming
Clara Hughes – Speed Skating, Cycling
Benoit Huot – Paralympic Swimming
Daniel Igali – Wrestling
Carol Montgomery – Triathlon
Michael O'Shea – Football
Caroline Ouellette – Hockey
David Pelletier – Figure Skating
Chantal Petitclerc – Paralympic Racer
Matt Pettinger – Hockey
Steve Podborski – Alpine Skiing