



THE HISTORY OF RIGHT TO PLAY

THE FORMATION OF OLYMPIC AID

The Lillehammer Olympic Organizing Committee (LOOC) conceived Olympic Aid (now Right To Play) in 1992 in preparation for the 1994 Olympic Winter Games in Lillehammer, Norway. The focus of Olympic Aid during these Games was to show support for people in war-torn countries and areas of distress. A partnership was formed among the Red Cross, Save the Children, Norwegian Refugee Council, Norwegian People's Council, the Norwegian Church Fund and Olympic Aid to raise funds for and awareness of the specific initiatives each of these organizations were implementing.

Olympic athletes were chosen to be ambassadors of Olympic Aid prior to and during the Games to assist in the fundraising efforts. The lead Athlete Ambassador was four-time Gold Medalist Johann Olav Koss, who donated a large portion of his winnings to Olympic Aid, and challenged fellow athletes and the public to donate money for each gold medal won. An unprecedented \$18 million US was raised and used for five main projects: building a hospital in Sarajevo; building schools in Eritrea; supporting a mother/child program in Guatemala; supporting refugees in Afghanistan; and a support program for children living with disabilities in Lebanon.

THE FUNDRAISING YEARS – SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN PARTNERS

Between 1994 and 2000, Olympic Aid continued to raise funds for children in disadvantaged situations, building on the momentum of subsequent Olympic Games. In 1996, Olympic Aid formed a partnership with UNICEF and raised \$13 million US prior to and during the Olympic Games in Atlanta. The funds were donated by ten different countries and assisted UNICEF in vaccinating approximately 12.2 million children and over 800,000 women.

This vaccination effort was extraordinary as it resulted in two Olympic Truces: one truce in Afghanistan that lasted the duration of the Atlanta Games (16 days) and a second truce in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq for forty-eight hours. All fighting stopped in the regions so the UNICEF staff could safely immunize the children and women of these areas. Olympic Aid further supported these initiatives by engaging Olympians in Olympic Festivals in areas where vaccinations were taking place and by educating these communities as to the benefits of immunization.

Similarly, for the 2000 Games in Sydney, Olympic Aid initiated a fundraising campaign in support of partnerships with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Australian Sports Commission -- Indigenous Sports Program, the Leukemia Foundation, the Children's Cancer Institute Australia and the Patrick Rafter Cherish the Children Foundation.

TRANSITION TO DIRECT IMPLEMENTATION – WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

With its incorporation in late 2000, Olympic Aid (later to become known as Right To Play) made the transition from "fundraising vehicle" to implementing Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). In March 2001, the first sport and play programs began in partnership with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in refugee communities in Angola and Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, Olympic Aid made headway on other influential fronts, placing sport firmly on the agendas of athletes, the UN and humanitarian leaders.

During the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City, Olympic Aid hosted a Roundtable Forum entitled “Healthier, Safer, Stronger: Using Sport for Development to build a brighter future for children worldwide”. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan gave the keynote address while global leaders in health, sport and development participated in a moderated discussion of the role of sport in relation to four development issues: vaccination, tobacco-free sport, HIV/AIDS prevention and the rehabilitation of refugees. Participants included Dr. Gro Brundtland (Director General, World Health Organization), Ms. Carol Bellamy (Executive Director, UNICEF), Mr. Ruud Lubbers (High Commissioner, UNHCR), Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mr. Adolf Ogi (Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace) and Dr. Jacques Rogge (President, International Olympic Committee), among others. The Olympic Aid Roundtable placed Sport for Development firmly on the UN agenda.

In early 2003, Olympic Aid became known as Right To Play in order to meet the growing demands of program implementation and fundraising. Building on the founding legacy of Lillehammer, this transition allowed Right To Play to include both Olympic athletes and other elite sports figures as Athlete Ambassadors; increase relationships to non-Olympic sports; partner with a wider variety of private sector funders; and deepen involvement at the grassroots level.

Today, Right To Play has a permanent presence in the world of children’s sport and play. In addition to its child development programs, Right To Play is established as a force in international advocacy on behalf of every child’s right to play, and is actively involved in research and policy development in this area. Our vision is to engage leaders on all sides of sport, business and media to ensure every child’s right to play.