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Sweden Men's National Team in manifestation against bullying during friendly at Friends Arena

Saturday's friendly between Sweden and Chile was not only a warm up before the FIFA World Cup – it was also a manifestation against bullying and a call for adults to stop being spectators and start taking action. Instead of being escorted to the pitch by juniors, each Swedish player escorted a sculpture. The sculptures represented the 60,000 Swedish children exposed to bullying every year – more than the seated capacity at Friends Arena.

To shine light on all children exposed to bullying, Swedbank, Sweden's largest bank, in partnership with the Friends Foundation, a Swedish anti-bullying organization, has installed an exhibition at the Swedish national arena, Friends Arena. Twenty-five life-size bronze sculptures of children are now on display at the arena at locations where bullying commonly occurs, such as locker rooms and washrooms.

Players in manifestation against bullying

During the friendly game against Chile, the Swedish players chose to spread the message and take action against bullying. Each sculpture held by the Swedish player represented thousands of Swedish children exposed to bullying, who all deserve to be seen and heard.

"Despite the fact that almost seven out of ten adults have experienced bullying in their childhood, many are still passive spectators of bullying as adults. With this manifestation we want to shine light on the children who are exposed to bullying and call upon adults to go from being a spectator to becoming a friend"

- Per Leander, Secretary General of the Friends Foundation

A friendly game with the power to change lives

Bullying is a global issue and awareness is key to preventing it. The manifestation during this friendly highlighted a strong message of intent to adults not only in Sweden, but all around the world, to stop being spectators of bullying.

"Swedbank has been the main sponsor of Friends, and partner of the Swedish Football Association, for many years, and we are very grateful that the players in the national team wanted to help spread the important message and encourage people all over the world to stop being spectators of bullying. Football has a unique ability to engage and unite people, and this friendly has the power to change the lives of thousands of children in Sweden, and more so, the rest of the world"

- Johan Eriksson, Head of External Communications at Swedbank

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Summary in Spanish

El equipo Nacional de Fútbol Sueco en manifestación contra el acoso escolar durante la entrada al Estadio Nacional Friends Arena.

El partido amistoso de fútbol entre Chile y Suecia del sábado 24 de Marzo, no fue solo una carga antes del Campeonato Mundial para el equipo Nacional de Suecia, sino que también fue una manifestación contra el acoso escolar y una invitación al público a dejar de ser espectadores pasivos. En lugar de ser escoltados por la junta de juniors, los jugadores suecos escoltaron unas esculturas de niños. Las esculturas representaban a los 60,000 niños expuestos al acoso escolar en Suecia cada año, más que un estadio Friends lleno.

Para visualizar a los niños que son objetos de acoso, Swedbank, uno de los bancos más grandes de Suecia, ha establecido una exposición de arte permanente en el Estadio Friends Arena, en cooperación con la organización de los derechos del niño, Friends. Veinticinco esculturas de bronce que representan a niños de tamaño natural se encuentran diseminadas por todas las áreas del Estadio Friends Arena, en lugares donde el acoso es más común, como los vestíbulos de vestuarios y los baños.

Permanent artwork exhibition against bullying at Friends Arena

- Swedbank joined The Friends Foundation in their fight against bullying as their main sponsor in 2002. In 2012, Swedbank named Sweden's national arena in Stockholm 'Friends Arena'. The idea was for the arena to become a physical manifestation against bullying and a reminder that no child should ever have to be subjected to bullying.
- This February, The Friends Foundation in partnership with Swedbank installed 25 life-size bronze sculptures of children at Friends Arena. The sculptures, together with the name of the arena, are a permanent reminder and manifestation that no child should ever have to experience being bullied, and that the adult world needs to take action against it.
- The artist behind the work is Maria Ångquist Klyvare.



Facts about bullying in Sweden

- In Sweden, 60,000 children are bullied every year. This number of children would fill the entire Friends Arena in Stockholm.
- Almost seven in ten adults (65 percent) have experienced bullying in their childhood. Four in ten (39 percent) of them have been bullied by others; one in ten (11 percent) have been bullies themselves; and three in ten (29 percent) have been passive spectators.
- Almost every other Swede (45 percent) wishes that they had done more to prevent a situation in which someone else was being bullied.
- School is by far the most common place where bullying occurs, as 94 percent of the respondents claimed it happened there the most.
- Overall, four in ten (43 percent) of adults feel that bullying has increased over the past ten years.

The survey was performed in January 2018. Over 3,000 Swedes between the ages of 18-79 responded to the survey.

About the Friends Foundation

Friends is a non-profit organization, dedicated to the prevention of bullying. We educate and support schools, pre-schools and sports clubs throughout Sweden. Our vision is to see young children and adolescents grow up in a safe and secure society where everyone is treated equally.

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