2014 KYFA LADIES NATIONWIDE TOURNAMENT

Theme: Girl power; Re-awakening girls’ talents in Kisumu County’
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1. Background

1.1 Introduction: Kisumu Youth Football Association

Kisumu Youth Football Association (KYFA) is a sports-for-development organization that has been hosting football competitions in the greater Kisumu area since 2004. In addition to running boys and girls leagues from March to October of each year, KYFA provides technical football and life skills trainings and engages in numerous community development activities. KYFA sees sports as a low-cost, high-impact tool for advancing a broad range of community development objectives. Under the organization’s community development program, KYFA implements

(a) Girls’ mentorship program targeting 400 teenage girls – KYFA’s approach is to involve vulnerable school-going girls who are organized into groups or teams of about twenty girls in a team mentorship programme. Trained KYFA peer educators and volunteer community mentors are paired with teams with whom they undertake life skills curriculum based activities. The mentors serve as positive role models as they develop a guiding and teaching relationship with the girls. In the course of the project, the teams and clubs are transformed into social support groups for girls by creating awareness of their personal potential and reducing barriers to missing school.

(b) Advocacy through sports project- This project targets 200 children with mental disability in 12 special units in Kisumu. The project uses sports to create community awareness on the needs, talents and schooling opportunities for children with mental disabilities. KYFA does this through provision of special units with more equipment and opportunities to play sports (including football and athletics). This is being sustained by creating a stronger linkage amongst area schools and by helping their network to identify long-terms means of community support (i.e corporations and local businesses).

(c) Football 4 WASH - a project launched in 2012 with a goal of reducing diseases and changing behavior on WASH principles through football programs in selected primary schools. KYFA, in partnership with local and Dutch partners therefore uses football as an entry point to improve water, sanitation and hygiene in selected schools. The project is being implemented in 32 primary schools in Kisumu North, Kisumu East and Nyando districts.
1.2 Introduction: Plan International

Plan is an international child-centred community development organization without political, religious or governmental affiliations. The organization envisions a world in which all children realize their full potential in societies which respect people’s rights and dignity. Plan strives to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life of deprived children in developing countries through a process that unites people across cultures and adds value to their lives.

Currently the organization is implementing a project known as “Enhancing an Inclusive Learning environment in Seme Sub County” in Kisumu PU.

This project is aimed at empowering all children for greater participation.

CCCD is Plan’s “rights-based approach in which children, families and communities are active and leading participants in their own development. It enhances their capacity and opportunity to work together with others to address structural causes and consequences of child poverty at all levels”.

Existence of deep seated structural deficiencies continue to constrain the level and quality of participation of girls in the governance processes locally and nationally. Weak participation of the girl child presents a gap in ensuring that girls have opportunities same as boys.

With gender bias and social construction, football is seen as a boy’s game and as a girl grows up, she accepts more and more the messages she receives from the family, teachers and wider communities about how they should behave. One stereotype is that girls should play with dolls and therefore be more emotional and caring; while boys should play with soldiers and be courageous and physically strong.

Because these roles for girls and boys are so strongly and consistently reinforced people believe they are biological, fundamentally part of being male or female, rather than being ‘socially constructed’ or brought about by social and cultural conditions. Children who do not live up to these gender stereotypes can be treated very harshly by their peers, their communities, and even their families. Just the threat of such treatment, which can include teasing or physical bullying can create enough fear to ensure that children conform to gender stereotypes, even when they don’t want to.

When these roles and ways of behaving are handed down from one generation to the next we trap children in what they ought to do and feel according to their sex. We prevent boys and girls from being who they really want to be and from making the decisions they would like to make about their lives.

This project therefore seeks to improve the Girls participation in school and without school thus building skills and nurturing talent. Participating in such an event therefore is moving away of the norm and widening the scope even further that girls and Boys can battle it out in various field without the normal social constructions. This will then boosts their self-esteem, gives the girls exposure, providing them with a level field to compete against themselves above all building talent.
1.3 Introduction: KYFA Ladies Nationwide Tournament

One of KYFA’s achievements is bringing football to those who are not often associated with the sport – the Girls. Since 2008, KYFA has been organizing an annual three day Ladies Nationwide Tournament in Kisumu. The event brings together over 300 girls from around the country to participate in a competitive football tournament and life skills/mentorship sessions. The three day football extravaganza is divided into two age categories; Under 15 and Free Age.

In 2012 and 2013, with help from the Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF) and Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund respectively (VGIF), KYFA hosted all 300 players in one venue and engaged them in a variety of girl empowerment activities such as themed skits, focus group discussions and motivational speakers. While the girls competed heavily during the day, in the evenings they came together to share their challenges and dreams as young women. Successful young women gave powerful motivational speeches every morning of the three day football show-piece

This report summarises the three day football tournament as well as the life skills and mentorship sessions conducted.

1.4 The Problem

The idea of organizing a Ladies Nationwide Tournament was informed by evidence within Western Kenya that there are little sporting opportunities for girls. Even with the huge popularity of football in the region, the game is still considered a male sport and talented female football players lack platforms to showcase their talents. There are few female football coaches and even fewer female sports role models to emulate. Over the years, KYFA has documented hundreds of cases where parents and other adults have prevented their daughters and girls under their care from engaging in football because of reasons including

a) Football is a man’s sport and thus women should not play it  
b) Girls who play football are often promiscuous as they meet men in pretext of going for trainings  
c) Football will not take a girl anywhere in life
Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that *Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.* This is never respected especially in many parts of Kenya where girls are expected to stay at home and perform domestic chores.

According to Participatory Situation Analysis for Kisu Plan International Program Unit, Child rights violations manifest widely in the district, in terms of: hunger, dropout from school often to fulfill domestic obligations or due to being orphaned, early marriage, insecure shelter, drudgery from labour, sexual abuse, neglect, powerless to influence their own livelihood decisions, voiceless ness, dependency of parents and guardians who are also trapped in the same cycle of poverty on a wide scale, psychological trauma, shame and humiliation.

The report also highlights further that social cultural myths, beliefs and practices entrench and compound the gender and generational marginalization has clearly defined boy child and girl child, this has engendered continued isolation of the girl child all in the name of “Social construction” of the society. Girls are facing a series of unique and urgent challenges that require specific attention if we are to harness the remarkable potential of girls to create a better life for themselves and their children, a more prosperous community, a healthier workforce and a stronger nation.

The Kenyan Demographic and Health survey (KDHS, 2008/9) indicates that 44.5 percent of births to women ages 15-49 are unplanned (includes unwanted and mistimed pregnancies). Teenage girls’ poor decisions and lack of mentorship and role models has been shown to be a major contributor to early pregnancies, school dropout cases, early marriages, and contraction of STIs/HIV etc. Some of the reasons for this include peer pressure, inadequate communication about sexuality at family level, unaffordable sanitary pads, heavy domestic workload and gender based violence.

KYFA and Plan sees sports (and in our case, specifically football) as a way of developing the talents and self-esteem of young girls. Through sports organized in a safe environment, hundreds of young girls are given the chance to showcase talents that are not usually recognized. When these girls are in the field, they get out of the ‘social construction’ that would ordinarily bar them from active participation in football. They have the unique opportunity of showing men and women; girls and boys that football can be for everyone, and many spectators are often surprised at the talent exhibited.

KYFA and Plan also believe that if vulnerable and disadvantaged girls can connect with non-parental peers, motivational speakers and role models who provide them with inspiration, guidance and information on life skills, they will be more likely to handle challenges.
affecting them, perform well in school, avoid high-risk activities and make more successful transitions to adulthood.

Over the last six years, KYFA has documented feedback and reflections from some of the teams that have participated in this annual football event. Based on the experiences of these teams and individual girls both while in Kisumu and in their various teams, we have learned more about how participation in sport and physical activity empowers individual girls and women. We have learnt that their involvement in sport and physical activity has, for example, built their life skills, confidence and body awareness and created social networks, which have resulted in dramatic positive life changes for participants. We have seen that involvement in sport and physical activity can positively change existing gender norms and help girls and women move into public spaces often reserved only for men. Moreover, we have learnt that the Annual Ladies Nationwide Tournament has provided opportunities to bring girls from different communities together and help realize development objectives relating to such issues as negative ethnicity, reproductive health and gender-based violence.

1.3 Objectives of the Annual Ladies Nationwide Tournament:

Specifically the objectives of the tournament have been:-

a) Provide an annual high quality football tournament to girls and young women in Kenya
b) Provide an annual positive platform for mentorship, role modelling, experiential learning and inspiration of girls and young women in Kenya.
c) Promoting voice of the Girl child and enhancing their participation in the society.

2.0 Activities

2.1 Tournament:

2.1.1 Overview
To achieve the above objectives, KYFA mobilized 386 girls from 22 ladies teams to the three day event. The teams came from nine (9) counties and were divided into two categories based on age. They included

**Under 15**
1. Manyatta United
2. Asol
3. Alungo
4. Ojola
5. The Bee’s
6. Suba Lakers
7. Soccer Angels
8. Kisumu Leeds
9. Portflorence
10. Shaurimoyo Eaglets

**Free Age**
1. Ikonyero girls
2. The Bee’s(Wuyeta girls)
3. Suba Lakers
4. Kisumu Leeds
5. Soccer queens
6. Thika queens
7. St Cecilia
8. Victoria Kobala
9. Kassagam Sec
10. Nyandolo Green Stars
11. Ibinzo girls
12. Jera

Teams were divided in two pools per category. Under 15 group matches were played at Highway Primary School and Kisumu Union Primary School while Free Age Matches were played at Kisumu Day High School and Carwash grounds. In total, 44 pool matches were played. Four teams per category moved into the semi finals and two teams per category into the finals.

Winners were as follows

**Under 15**
1. Manyatta United from Kisumu County
2. Soccer Angels from Nairobi County
3. Kisumu Leeds from Kisumu County
4. The Bees from Uasin Gishu County

**Free Age**
1. Soccer Queens from Nairobi County
2. Ibinzo Girls from Kakamega County
3. Thika Queens from Kiambu County
4. Kobala from Homabay County

Individual awards were also given to

- **Best Player (U15)**: Wangari Jane
  **Soccer Angels**
- **Best Player (Free Age)**: Rebecca Achieng
  **Thika Queens**
- **Best Goalkeeper (U15)**: Dorcas Wanjiru
  **Soccer Angels**
- **Best Goalkeeper (Free Age)**: Susan Auma
  **Soccer Queens**
2.1.2 Invitation to the tournament

Invitation letters to teams were sent in January, 2014 with reminders done in February, March and April. About thirty teams expressed interest to participate in the tournament. However, because of budgetary limitations, only, 22 were allowed to participate in the three day event based on first come, first serve basis.

2.1.3 Refereeing/ Officiation

KYFA prides itself in training and mentoring young referees since 2005. In preparation for the tournament, the referees committee organized a one day refresher course to prepare its membership on their roles during the tournament. After physical and theory tests, the best sixteen referees were selected to officiate in the tournament.

Throughout the entire tournament, there was no formal complaint on officiation and/or misconduct on the part of referees. Whenever a coach would verbally contest a decision made by referees during the matches, the able forth officials would calm him/her down and explain why such a decision was made.

2.1.4 Fixtures

Templates of fixtures were generated before the tournament day. For free age teams that had twelve teams, officials agreed to play the best of four matches each with each participating team randomly picking their pool and teams they would meet. For the under 15 category, teams again picked randomly their pool and order in which they would play. Each coach entered these details in the templates provided. This process was totally participatory with all the teams satisfied with the outcome.

2.1.5 Condition and accessibility of the fields of play

KYFA booked Carwash grounds and Kisumu Day High School for free age matches and Highway Primary School and Kisumu Union Primary School for Under 15 matches. Because the generous support of Plan International, all participating players were ferried to and from the venues of competitions.
There were challenges however at Highway Primary School field which lacked grass cover. Participating girls some of whom lacked shoes could not effectively play as the ground became really hot during the afternoons.

2.1.6 Ages of participants for the under 15 category
Age cheating is a major problem in Africa with little objective birth documents available. There were three formal complaints on ages of seven players from Manyatta United and Soccer Angels respectively. The dispute resolution committee cleared four of the players after producing birth certificates. Three of the players were vetted out of the tournament as they failed to produce any birth certificate or a letter from their school head.

There were still several coaches who informally contested ages of some players in the under 15 category.

2.1.7 Dispute Resolution
There was a dispute resolution committee composed of KYFA Manager, KYFA Competitions Officer, KYFA Chairman and Referees Chairman. The committee listened to four cases and delivered their judgments in a timely and fair manner. In three cases brought before it touching on age, the committee allowed four players to play on the basis of birth notification documents produced and vetted out three players. The committee also recommended forfeiture of a match by the Bees in the 3rd place playoffs after establishing that the team had used an ineligible player against the tournament rules.

2.1.8 Meals
Plan International supported dinner and breakfast for all participants during the three days. This generous donation had adequate variety thus serving greatly to energize all players for the marathon matches and replenished their energy reservoirs during the evenings. Apart from one isolated case of food delay in the evenings, participants were satisfied with meal provisions. KYFA on the other hand provided simple lunch to all participants for the three days.

2.1.9 Accommodation
All participating teams were hosted at Shaurimoyo Primary School. The teams were provided with a classroom for camping. They also had access to water, electricity and general support services. Participants from Asol, Alunog and Ojola were provided with mattresses as agreed by Plan International. KYFA hired security guards during day and night of tournament so as to ensure safety of all girls.
2.2 Mentorship and Life Skills sessions

KYFA mobilized a great team of mentors/motivation al speakers during the event. The mentors/motivation al speakers used personal life stories researched presentations on girls and talent nurturing and case studies to inspire and mentor participating girls. On the first day, KYFA invited Martha Karimi, the Captain of Harambee Starlets, the National Ladies team and also a KNVB coaching Instructor. Martha shared with the girls what it takes to succeed as a female football player. She also shared with the girls her life journey as a girl growing up in Mathare slums in Nairobi with little support from parents in nurturing her talent. At the end of her 45 minutes presentations, she held one on one brief discussion with several girls who were eager to meet and talk to her.

On the second day, KYFA invited Lillian Vera Oluoch, a development worker at Plan International to talk to the girls about informed choices and how they affect talents and opportunities available to girls. She shared with the girls how to identify, nurture and realize full benefits of one’s talents. She emphasised to the girls the value of education even as the girls pursue their other talents. To cap her presentation, she introduced Daphine Akoth, the top girl in 2013 Kenya Certificate of Primary Education exams. This was a game changer as several girls
stretched their necks to see a girl they had only seen on TV during the release of 2013 KCPE examinations. Her brief presentation titled ‘organization’ demonstrated to the girls just how being organized can make one succeed.

On the third day, KYFA invited Anne Njau, Kisumu West Sub-County Youth Officer who shared with the girls available opportunities for girls in the government and how to access them. She offered to mentor interested out of school girls from Kisumu in accessing available opportunities.

3.0 Challenges

a) A few participating teams came with more players than they were required to bring. This put a strain on the meals and transport as it was impossible to turn them back considering the distance they had travelled to reach Kisumu

b) There was a serious water problem during the tournament as KIWASCO Water lines failed. As the organizer, KYFA was forced to buy water for all the girls from the water vendors throughout the event

c) Two girls were seriously injured and had to be rushed to hospital. Another girl fell ill at night on one of the nights and had to be rushed to hospital. This put a strain on the available resources

d) Funding for accommodation and tournament logistics are still a challenge. Considering that the tournament participants cannot pay for the whole expenses of the event, KYFA still depends on support from well wishers to pull through.

e) There are still cases of overage players in the U15 category. Even though attempts have been made to discourage this, challenges still exist

f) There was little publicity over the media on the event even though it was one of a kind in Western Kenya. The only media coverage was on the Standard a day after the tournament.

4.0 Recommendations

a) Tournament branding and marketing

KYFA has participated in organization of the Ladies Nationwide Tournament 8 times in Kisumu. During this period, the event has grown to include mentorship and life skills. There is need to consolidate and utilize this brand for marketing and fundraising for this event. This should also include engagement of both print and electronic media

b) Mentorship and Life Skills

Several girls have every year have reported to KYFA and their coaches their satisfaction and admiration of speakers invited to the Nationwide Tournament. It is
therefore important to scale up mentorship/life skills sessions from just one hour in the morning to two hours either in the morning or evening. There is also need to follow up a few of the girls who have participated in the tournament over the years and changes that may have taken place in their lives.

c) Partnership development

The 2014 Nationwide Tournament was a success because of two key partners: Plan International and Hennie Schuurs. Plan International provided dinner and breakfast to all participating girls while Hennie provided all awards valued at a quarter million Kenya Shillings. As organizers, KYFA should maintain these partnerships as well as develop new ones.

d) Tournament Rules and Regulations

All teams should only be allowed to bring in required number of players. Additionally, teams should commit to uphold all event regulations by appending their signatures.

Additionally, there is need to review the processes of age verification and penalties in case a team is found to have cheated. There is also need to review the process of arriving at the qualifying team in pool matches in case of a tie in points.

e) Chaperones

All Under 15 teams MUST be required to bring in an adult female chaperone who MUST also sleep with the girls. KYFA should also conduct spot checks at night to ensure all the girls are in the allocated rooms.

5.0 Conclusion

The 2014 KYFA Ladies Nationwide Tournament was a success courtesy of support from Plan International and Hennie Schuurs. Over 380 girls camped at Shaurimoyo for three days taking part in mentorship/Life Skills sessions during morning hours and competitive football tournament during the day. There is need to build on success for 2014 as preparations for 2015 tournament begins.