



# ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH FOOTBALL

**ACORD (Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development)** is a Pan-African non-governmental organisation that has been working for social justice and development in Africa since 1976. ACORD's work is guided by a number of fundamental values and working principles, chief amongst these is the belief that individuals are the primary actors in their own development.

## **SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV) IN KENYA**

Rape and sexual assault in Kenya have reached epidemic proportions. Every 30 minutes a woman or girl is raped in the country. Young girls are especially vulnerable: nearly 1 in 3 Kenyan girls under the age of 18 experience sexual violence; and as many as 68% of school-aged children report having experienced sex under "coercive conditions." The epidemic of child rape leaves young girls at increased risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, and multiple other short and long-term physical and psychological health consequences. The grim statistics of violence against women in Kenya and Africa at large are unacceptable. Kenya has taken various measures to combat violence against women and girls (VAWG), including adapting numerous laws and policies. However, as long as social norms and attitudes continue to support a narrative of male dominance, a culture of impunity will persist.

## **HOW FOOTBALL CAN HELP BREAKDOWN THE NORMS THAT PERPETUATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

In Kenya, and in many sub-Saharan countries, dominant social norms support the idea and practice of male dominance, condone VAWG, and support impunity for the perpetrators. ACORD believes that interventions designed to empower women and girls by promoting their leadership, informing and educating them about their rights, and supporting them to organize can help to breakdown these harmful social attitudes. Supporting such programs by running campaigns, working with men and boys, engaging local leaders, and teaching gender equality can amplify these positive effects. When women & girls know their rights and are empowered, supported, and resourced to claim them, then values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices will shift to recognise VAWG as unacceptable and a crime.

ACORD is working in partnership with the British Council and the English Premier League in Kenya, through the support of DFID, to use football as a tool to challenge harmful social norms, drawing on the brand strength of the English Premier League. The programme combines football and short education sessions to engage children and young people (from 10 to 20 years old) from different social and ethnic backgrounds in activities that build positive relationships among them and challenge attitudes and behaviours that foster VAWG. Coaches are recruited from the communities and trained to deliver a curriculum that will enable participants to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours around teamwork, fair play, self-confidence, and respect for self and others.

## RESULTS

ACORD's expertise in delivering community development and implementing interventions that reduce VAWG in Africa, together with its peace building work has bolstered the successful delivery of the programme.

Achievements so far include:

- Over 100 coaches trained - 47% of active coaches are women
- 2,400 young people engaged to date – 45% of current participants are girls
- More than 2,000 community members engaged through awareness raising events
- Over 120 representatives of local government and civil society engaged to address and respond to VAWG
- Gender equitable attitudes among participants increased from 41% at baseline (47% for girls and 34% for boys) to 75% (79% among girls and 72% among boys) at the end of the curriculum
- Anecdotal evidence of positive behaviour change among young people and coaches
- New working group on VAWG established in Mount Elgon and commitment to a VAWG recovery centre by Bungoma county government

## PROGRAM APPROACH

- ❖ ACORD supports the development of locally owned and led football sessions, which engage both boys and girls on an on-going basis.
- ❖ ACORD and its partners lead an advocacy campaign linked to the program which supports wider community engagement targeting four main groups: (1) Young people within the target communities; (2) Participants' families and community leaders; (3) Local authorities as duty bearers who have a responsibility for preventing VAWG; and (4) Women and girls who are affected by violence.
- ❖ Partners organize training programme targeting local coaches from selected schools, working with volunteer European coaches develops knowledge, skills and behaviours around teamwork, fair play, self-confidence, and respect for self and others.



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