



S4DA

MORE THAN JUST SPORTS

Lessons Learned from the Sport for Development in Africa Project

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Table of Contents

1. Foreword	04
2. The Power to change Lives // Facts and Figures.....	06
3. The Starting Line: Where it all begins	08
4. For greater Impact, upscaling is Key	10
5. Safe Places, safe Spaces	12
6. Climbing Hills: Innovation in the Face of Crisis.....	14
7. Teaming Up: AUSC and Regional Networks.....	16
Interview: Dr. Chipande (AUSC)	18
8. Rewriting the Rules: Tackling Gender Stereotypes through Sports.....	20
Interview with Dorcas Amakobe and Deogratia Okoko (MTG).....	22
Interview with Marina Gning (API Afrique)	25
9. Crossing the Finish Line and catching a Glimpse of the Future.....	28
10. Tools & Resources: A Movement you can take with you	30



1

FOREWORD

This brochure is dedicated to the thousands of coaches and hundreds of organizations in Africa, who are committed to the Sport for Development (S4D) approach.

As the team behind the “Sport for Development in Africa (S4DA)” project, implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), we’ve had the privilege of working with many of these partners over the last 10 years and more.

S4D harnesses the power and appeal of sports to educate children and youth, especially in building essential social skills like teamwork, leadership, fair play and conflict resolution. It helps them to develop competencies that are important for their future personal or professional life. The approach can also be combined with lessons on other important topics such as health, environment, vocational training and in refugee or crisis contexts. S4D is a very powerful tool when you work in sensitive environments, for example, if you are trying to break up harmful gender stereotypes.

Since the 1970s, S4D has been successfully used in diverse contexts on the African continent. It’s not about promoting performance-driven sports. Rather, it focuses on the physical, mental and social benefits of sport participation. S4D uses sport to open conversations around tough issues, dismantle stigmas and inspire behavioral change, particularly in areas like sexual and gender-based violence. S4D is an investment in the most important resource we have on earth: children and youth! In an increasingly insecure and interconnected world, we need future leaders who are not just equipped with knowledge but also with empathy, resilience and strong social skills. Sport for development can make an important contribution to this.

This brochure offers a look back at over a decade of the S4DA project. We are grateful for the commitment and engagement of our partner organizations in Africa working at all levels – from our pan-African partners such as the African Union Sports Council (AUSC), the OlympAfrica Foundation, Special Olympics Africa and the Equal Play Effect Africa network (representing 50 very committed S4D organizations from different regions) to national and regional efforts with education ministries and institutions incorporating S4D in policies and strategies. At the local level, passionate grassroots organizations are showing children and youth how to improve their competencies for a better life on an every day basis.



Here, we hope to shed some light on what our partner organizations and S4DA have jointly achieved: What has worked well? Which partnerships have been formed? Which networks have been established? And finally, which lessons can we draw about the broader impact of S4D? Adopting the S4D approach is a journey filled with learning, since there is no one-size-fits all solution for its implementation! Every context is unique and requires adaptation for its success. External factors, such as the COVID pandemic, heavily shaped the way S4D is designed and delivered.

Over the past 10 years, our journey with our amazing and highly engaged partners has been nothing short of a marathon. We're proud of what we've achieved, and we invite you to reflect with us on the most important lessons we've learned along the way. Enjoy reading!

Thomas Levin,
Head of the Sport for Development in Africa Project (S4DA)

SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT (S4D) PRIORITISES THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF SPORT

S4D uses sports as a means to strengthen life skills

- S4D offers high quality sports activities and combines them with life-skills training. Quality sports attracts youth and ensures a fun learning environment. The focus on training in an age and context specific manner allows to strengthen personal and social competences that are needed to participate in society actively and positively.

S4D is inclusive and holistic

- Embracing a sport-for-all philosophy S4D encompasses various groups and tries to reach as many people as possible in order to enhance personal and social competences. It unites heterogeneous groups in diverse settings and appreciates differences and all abilities.



2

THE POWER TO CHANGE LIVES

Sport has the power to change lives. Numerous rigorous impact studies worldwide as well as the ones conducted within S4D projects of German Development Cooperation clearly show this. The studies were for example conducted in Colombia, Iraq, Albania, Senegal and Namibia.

TRY IT OUT!

Added value to classical education with its fun and playful methodology and by using the attractiveness of sports for boys and girls alike.

IMPACT STUDIES SHOW THAT S4D:

- increases self-confidence
- strengthens women and girls against gender-based violence, sexual harassment and abuse
- increases personal resilience

THE S4D APPROACH IS

- an excellent impact accelerator to change mindsets
- strengthening positive attitudes like self-confidence
- tackling harmful practices and behavior like gender inequalities.
- an ideal tool to be used in culturally sensitive areas like hygiene and sanitation or menstruation to educate children and youth in these topics in a very playful and easily accessible way.

More than 1.4 million children & youth have benefited from the S4DA program.

More than 40,000+ children & youth (40% female) are regularly participating in S4D trainings.

180+ sports grounds have been constructed in 12 African countries



INFOBOX

Sport for Development in Africa (S4DA) uses sport to promote education, gender equality, social cohesion, and personal development across Africa. Since 2014, S4DA has been working with governments, schools, organizations and communities to integrate sport-based learning into education and youth development. Through structured programs, training, and policy integration, we ensure that children and youth not only play but also gain essential life skills like teamwork, leadership, conflict resolution and resilience.

LOOKING AHEAD

Every year, 20 million young people enter the job market in Africa, facing a high risk of informal or unemployment. The S4D approach helps them to develop essential social skills that improve their chances in the formal employment sector. Beyond that, it plays a vital role in steering youth away from crime, harmful behaviours or losing hope in their future. Sports is after all one of the healthiest leisure activities you can think of for physical and mental health!

S4DA's success lies in how it integrates fun, movement, and life skills into everyday systems. It works because it speaks the language of youth: active, expressive, hopeful. To anyone working in education, health, peacebuilding, or gender: S4D is your invitation to do work differently for a greater impact. Let sport move your work!



127+ partner organizations have been supported in implementing S4D

More than 2,300 multipliers & coaches have been trained in S4D



7 African countries have integrated S4D into their national education policies or in country-wide training and education curricula





3

THE STARTING LINE: WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

Although sport is widely recognized as an important element for a healthy and active society, investments in inclusive sports infrastructure and sport as an educational instrument is often overlooked. In particular, the unique power of sport to positively influence the personal development of youth and children, and to foster positive societal change such as improved gender equality, tackling harmful gender stereotypes and practices and improved social cohesion, is heavily underestimated. This was the starting point for the S4DA project's mission: to further promote the use of the S4D approach on the African continent. A continent that has been the home of S4D approaches since the 1970s.

Although children and youth prove every day that doing sports doesn't solely depend on having access to proper sport facilities, the possibility to enjoy a diverse range of team sports depends on having access to suitable and accessible infrastructure. It's also a question of safety. For children, and especially girls and women, having a secure space to play is essential to feeling free, confident and without worries for their safety.

Sports grounds have been a centerpiece of S4DA right from its launch in 2014. Construction activities posed the greatest challenge throughout all phases of the project, encompassing issues such as time limitations, political pressure, balancing quality with quantity, partner engagement and commitment, sustainability, budget constraints, and working in remote areas.

Since 2014, 180 sports grounds have been constructed or renovated across the African continent with support of S4DA, providing access to sports for more than 1.4 million children and youth. An essential part of each sports ground is its sustainable management and maintenance. User committees, consisting of important stakeholders in the community, foster ownership on a local level. Using locally sourced materials and construction expertise is another important element of sustaining the sport infrastructure in the long run.

However, sport itself is only one side of the story. While sport itself has a positive impact on health and mental wellbeing, it is also an ideal vehicle to learn essential life skills. On the field, young athletes learn more than just how to kick a ball or score a goal. They develop social skills such as teamwork, communication, self-confidence, leadership and resilience skills that stay with them long after the game is over. S4D is built on this idea:

using the power of sport to teach life lessons in a fun, interactive way that resonates far beyond the playing field. By embedding theoretical learning into practical sports activities, S4D makes education more impactful, accessible, and engaging.

“ VOICES FROM THE FIELD ”

“Africa is the mother of sports for development, not in the sense that it started it, but in the sense that starting from four decades ago, in Africa S4D really gained roots, emergence of very influential S4D initiatives, groundbreaking, serious impacts on the lives of young people, particularly in less privileged communities. I do not know of any other continent where S4D has made this much impact.” Dr. Chipande, Coordinator of the African Union Sports Council Yaoundé, Cameroon

“The greatest return you can get being involved in S4D is to see children and youth enjoying an S4D session on the pitch. The joy, laughter and enthusiasm of participants is an amazing reward you get for the work you are trying to do. Everyone who has been on a sports ground performing a team sport knows how it feels to enjoy this experience and the things you learn working as a team to achieve your goal. Combining this experience with S4D sessions, e.g. on gender equality is the most powerful tool that I know that can influence your growing.” Thomas Levin, Head of the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Eschborn, Germany

“In my opinion, sport is much more than just a leisure activity; it's a real driver for change. It gives young people a structure, a framework in which they can learn discipline, respect for rules, how to surpass themselves, etc.” Celia Cissé, S4D Coach, Founder of JAB Africa, Dakar, Senegal

“I learnt more about sport for development and how sport is a powerful tool that can be used to create awareness to the community on various topics. That it can be used to educate, change mindsets and even pass information to different people.” Khairat Ali, Women and Sports Project Coordinator, Tanzania Media Women's Association, Zanzibar



4

FOR GREATER IMPACT, UPSCALING IS KEY

A sports field itself can make a difference in a child's life, but it takes a village to raise a child according to an African proverb. Real impact happens when entire communities, schools, and governments embrace S4D as part of everyday life.

Since its inception, S4DA has regularly reached over 40,000 children and youth through structured sports-based learning. Regularly means that each of those youth and children has participated in at least 60% of the S4D activities offered on a regular basis. But for S4D to truly benefit larger numbers of children, it cannot remain limited to small-scale projects. It must be embedded in national education systems, government policies, and community programs to ensure long-term impact on a broad range.

For this to happen, different stakeholders need to act. As of today, S4DA directly supported 7 governments in Africa (Kenya, Namibia, Ethiopia, Zanzibar, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo) to integrate S4D-based approaches into their national strategies, sector concepts, or nationwide (school and TVET/higher education) curricula, ensuring that learning through sport is not just an option but part of the formal education systems. Governments play a key role in expanding this reach, ensuring that sports-based learning is systematically included on a national level so that every child, in every classroom, has access to sport as a tool for personal development, social inclusion, and gender equality. Good examples are the "Institut National Supérieur de l'Education Populaire et du Sport (INSEPS)" in Dakar or the "Institut National de la Jeunesse et des Sports (INJS)" in Lomé where S4D has been integrated in the national education system. But governments and schools cannot do it alone. Hundreds of civil society organizations (127 thereof with support of S4DA) across Africa have embedded S4D into their work. Civil society actors and community-based organizations are critical in bringing S4D directly to local communities. In Zanzibar, e.g. organizations such as the "Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association (ZAFELA)", the "Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA)" or the "Center for Youth Dialogue (CYD)" have implemented S4D approaches to strengthen social cohesion on the Zanzibar islands and to tackle sexual and gender-based violence. When all these levels—governments, schools, and communities—work together, S4D has the power to create lasting change. It is not just about playing sports but about shaping a generation of young people equipped with strong competencies in teamwork, resilience, and leadership skills that will stay with them for life.



“ VOICES FROM THE FIELD ”

“One of the most impactful aspects of my experience with S4DA has been seeing the way the approach fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community. It's not just about implementing gender-sensitive practices, but about creating a cultural shift where everyone, coaches, athletes, parents, and community leaders feels invested in the process of change. I'm excited to see how these efforts will continue to evolve and hope that the lessons learned through S4DA will inspire other communities to take similar actions.” (Rufeya Juma, Project Coordinator, Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association (ZAFELA))

“Over time, we strengthened partnerships with sports associations, universities, and local organizations, making S4DA a recognized and respected initiative in Senegal. This cross-sectoral collaboration with multiple other countries particularly in the west has allowed us to scale up impact and reach more young people through sports.” Catherine Daraspe, Regional Coordinator West Africa and Hedris Fri Achiri, Advisor in the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Dakar, Senegal

“When I joined the project, the focus was more on the local level, working with mainly CSOs in specific smaller communities. Over the years, the project has grown to working at the national, regional and continental levels. Today, the project is not only able to implement activities at local community levels but also connects that with the national levels esp. with policies, strategies etc. This creates better understanding amongst the different stakeholders about the power of sports and helps marginalized communities get connected to the higher-level stakeholders and authorities. This also assists in ensuring resources and policies developed are connected to the target group.” Frankline Olukohe, Regional Advisor East Africa within the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Stone Town, Zanzibar



5 SAFE PLACES, SAFE SPACES

Sport should take place in a space of joy, empowerment, and belonging. But for too many young athletes, the reality is different. Harassment, abuse, and gender-based violence (GBV) in sports are global issues that remain under-reported and underestimated. S4D also needs to look at the potentially harmful side of sports. Recent studies suggest that nearly 1 in 3 young athletes experience some form of harassment or abuse in sport. Girls face double the risk compared to boys, with many suffering in silence due to fear, stigma, or lack of support. Worldwide, but also in many African countries, safeguarding mechanisms are weak, leaving young athletes vulnerable.

The good news? Change is happening!

At the continental level, the African Union Sports Council (AUSC) and S4DA have launched safeguarding guidelines to ensure that safety isn't optional. It's a core pillar of sports policy. Across Africa, these policies strengthen reporting structures, train coaches, and set accountability measures to protect children.

At the community level, the OlympAfrica Foundation owned by the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa embeds its social sport activities in over 30 countries on the continent in children's rights, especially on the right to participation and protection. With the support of S4DA, the foundation implemented strict safeguarding policies, trained coaches and staff, and empowered young athletes in prevention of and response to harm and abuse in sport. Now, children and youth are not just participants, they are active voices in shaping safe sports environments.

From policy to the playing field, the message is clear: Safe sport isn't a privilege, it's a human right that is obliged to be fulfilled.





“ VOICES FROM THE FIELD ”

“Through campaigns like #KeepMovingAfrica, together with the AUSC we’re pushing for safe, inclusive, and gender-equal sports spaces across Africa. This advocacy work has the potential to shape real policies and actions by convincing policymakers to embed safeguarding, inclusivity and gender perspectives into national development agendas.” Jonas Sell, Advisor to the African Union Sports Council within the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Yaoundé, Cameroon

“We introduced trainings for coaches, staff, and athletes on identifying and reporting GBV, and established a more transparent reporting system for any incidents of abuse. We’ve also conducted awareness campaigns to educate the broader community about the importance of safeguarding in sports. As a result, we’ve observed an increased understanding and vigilance regarding athlete safety, a more supportive environment for reporting concerns, and a noticeable shift towards greater accountability in sports settings.” Rufeya Juma, Project Coordinator, Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association (ZAFELA)

“The OlympAfrica Foundation’s safeguarding system was launched to ensure that the children’s right to protection is respected and fulfilled through prevention and response mechanisms to cases of child harm and abuse in the environment of sport. Again, children actively shaped this process.” Rosilin Bock, Development Advisor to the OlympAfrica Foundation within the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Dakar, Senegal



African Union Sports Council (AUSC)

The African Union Sports Council is a specialized Technical Office of the African Union responsible for sports. AUSC was established through the endorsement of the Statute of AUSC by the Assembly of African Heads of States and Governments in 2016. Its mandate is co-ordination of the African Sports Movement and being a forum for concerted action between Member States for the promotion and development of sports and development through sport in Africa.





6 CLIMBING HILLS: INNOVATION IN THE FACE OF CRISIS

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic posed one of the greatest challenges to the personal development and mental well-being of children and youth. Isolation, school closures, and the loss of structured activities left many without the opportunity to connect with friends, play, and engage in sports. This lack of physical activity and social interaction took a heavy toll, particularly on young people who relied on sports as a safe space for learning, growth, and support.

S4DA was hit hard by the pandemic as well. Schools and extracurricular sports activities came to a sudden halt, disrupting engagement with thousands of children across multiple countries. However, this crisis also became a catalyst for innovation. Faced with the challenge of continuing its mission under severe restrictions, S4DA embraced digital solutions, a transformation that not only allowed the project to continue but also expanded its reach in new ways.

By shifting towards online learning, digital coaching tools, and interactive storytelling formats, S4DA ensured that children and youth could continue being physically active, developing their skills, even in lockdown. Some of these innovations remain in use today, making sports-based learning more accessible and scalable beyond the pandemic.



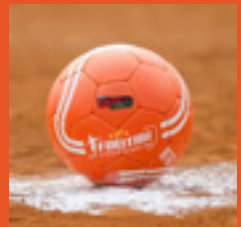


“ VOICES FROM THE FIELD ”

“The Weerwi series introduced edutainment as a powerful tool in sport-for-development. By blending sports, storytelling, and entertainment, the series made critical discussions on gender equality and inclusion more accessible to wider audiences. This was particularly effective in engaging youth, reinforcing key messages in a relatable and engaging format.” Catherine Daraspe, Regional Coordinator West Africa and Hedris Fri Achiri, Advisor in the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Dakar, Senegal

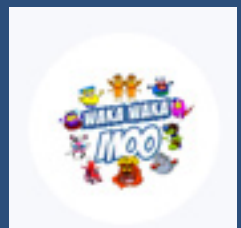
Kenya – FOOTAH

An interactive digital football game developed in partnership with Usiku Games, FOOTAH keeps youth active even when they're off the pitch. Players create their own teams, track real-life activity levels through Google Fit, and engage in friendly competition, all while promoting sportsmanship, teamwork, and a love for movement.



Namibia: WAKA WAKA MOO

A groundbreaking hybrid animated & live-action educational video series, Waka Waka Moo uses storytelling and puppetry to teach life skills through sport. Covering topics from basic math and geography to health, safety, and financial literacy, the show reaches children in their local languages, including English, Afrikaans, Oshiwambo, and Setswana.



Senegal: WEERWI Series

Weerwi is more than just a video series, it's a movement for gender equality and menstrual health through sports. Created and largely produced by API Afrique, a Senegalese social enterprise, the series uses bold storytelling to break taboos and empower young girls. In partnership with S4DA, several co-produced episodes were developed, addressing inclusion, the menstrual cycle, and positive masculinities in relatable, everyday settings. Viewed over 1.62 million times on YouTube, Weerwi proves the power of creative content to educate and inspire, even in times of crisis.





7 TEAMING UP: AUSC AND REGIONAL NETWORKS

A quantum leap in the development of S4DA was to focus on regional partnerships and networks for an increased pan-African impact. The partnership with the African Union Sports Council (AUSC), with its mandate to promote the development of sports and sport for development on the African continent, turned out to be a real game changer for the outreach of the project. It's amazing to see what the AUSC has achieved in only 3 years of collaboration.

Besides open-access guidelines about S4D and gender, safeguarding and inclusion (AUSC Advocacy Briefs) and the #KeepMovingAfrica Campaign, the AUSC has developed a 5-year strategic plan on how to foster S4D and sport on the African continent. The guidelines were accompanied by jointly designed dissemination efforts and advocacy work from the continental level to AUSC Regions and AU Member States. Through innovative digital solutions, S4DA and the AUSC Secretariat jointly strengthened the AUSC's function as an information and knowledge hub and platform for the African sports ecosystem. This contributed to a sustained change in awareness of AUSC stakeholders on the potential of S4D in Africa.

Together with regional civil society partners such as the OlympAfrica Foundation and Special Olympics Africa, Sport Impact and others the impact scale was increased beyond the borders of traditionally country-related measures of the project. The creation and development of the Equal Play Effect Africa network together with civil society partners such as Common Goal, Soccer Without Borders Uganda, Moving the Goalposts Kilifi, Tackle, TIBU Africa and Kick4Life is another element that has made a real difference on the grass-roots level. Bringing these different actors on different levels together to discuss progress and challenges in sport for development added another impact layer to the project. Supporting strong regional partners in positioning their work in regional and global networks and conferences such as the Sport Impact Summit or the Finance in Common Summit bring the urgently needed visibility of sport for development to fruition. It's also a great development that actors from very different sectors (policy-level and decision-makers, civil society organizations, private sector and academia) come together to jointly push sport for development in Africa. The linkages and networks are essential for increasing relevance and visibility for the sector and in raising interest in investing in the powerful tool of sport for development.





“ VOICES FROM THE FIELD ”

“The key challenge was probably that for many stakeholders, especially policymakers, the contributions of sport to development were not evident and thus one couldn’t expect their buy-in for embedding S4D into national development agendas. Therefore, we created together with the AUSC a digital M&E system, collecting results in the AU sport ecosystem guided by the AUSC Strategic Plan 2024–2028. This system will provide a growing evidence-base and can be used as a powerful tool to further advocate for the embedment of S4D on policy level.” Jonas Sell, Advisor to the African Union Sports Council within the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Yaoundé, Cameroon

“The legacy of the EPE Africa network lies in the power of community. Through the network, our partners connected across borders – local, national, and regional. We saw change agents coming together, discussing barriers, exchanging learnings, and developing innovative solutions to context-specific challenges. This energy and commitment to change is the key to this network growing beyond our partnership and the project cycle.” Mariam Ibrahim, Gender Advisor in the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Eschborn, Germany

Special Olympics

Special Olympics is a global sports movement to end discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities. The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.



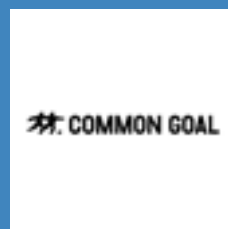
Sport Impact

Founded in 2020 and based in Dakar, Senegal, Sport Impact is an independent pan-African hub specialising in the structuring, coordination and promotion of sport projects in Africa.



Equal Play Africa Network

A pan-African network of sport for development and gender equality champions who implement the sport for development approach as a tool for raising awareness about gender equality, transforming gender roles, and promoting a positive image of masculinity. Thereby, equal access to opportunities for girls and boys on and off the pitch is unlocked by transforming the sports (for good) ecosystem in Africa through collective action to create more inclusive, safe and equitable spaces for all.





INTERVIEW: DR. CHIPANDE (AUSC)

Dr. Decius Chipande is the Head of the African Union Sports Council (AUSC), the specialized technical office of the African Union responsible for the coordination and promotion of sport across the continent. With a background in academia, policy, and development, Dr. Chipande brings deep expertise in positioning sport as a tool for social transformation and economic growth.

What inspires you most about AUSC's mission and the role of sport in African society?

What inspires me most is what lies at the heart of sport: participation, inclusion, and access. Sport is not just a game; it's a platform for social and economic development. That's the core of AUSC's mission.

Sport strongly aligns with the aspirations of Agenda 2063. It promotes youth engagement, social cohesion, Pan-Africanism, and cultural pride. Sport contributes to uniting the continent, showcasing African heritage, and empowering youth, women, and people with disabilities.

Africa is the true home of Sport for Development. While it may not have started here, some of the most impactful S4D initiatives have grown on this continent, particularly in less affluent communities.

How did the partnership between AUSC and S4DA come about?

The partnership began through shared values and synergies. We initially collaborated on webinars focused on empowering women and girls in and through sport.

Safeguarding quickly became a central theme. Together, we developed practitioner-friendly safeguarding guidelines and e-courses that introduced S4D and safeguarding principles. This work laid the foundation for a deeper partnership.

What have been the most meaningful outcomes of this collaboration?

The joint needs assessment was transformative. It helped us understand our capabilities, gaps, and strategic priorities. We've since co-developed digital platforms, launched the "Keep Moving" campaign, and hosted influential webinars like "The Sports African Women Want." The most significant milestone has been the co-creation of AUSC's five-year strategic plan. It is fully aligned with Agenda 2063 and includes gender equality, inclusion, and youth participation as core pillars.

How has this work contributed to gender equality and inclusion?

The partnership has created real momentum for change. Campaigns like "The Sports African Women Want" gave women a platform to share experiences and inspire others. We've begun establishing Women and Girls Working Groups to ensure their voices are heard in policymaking. We aim to replicate these structures regionally and nationally to embed gender equality across African sport governance.

What lessons have you learned about working with partners like S4DA?

It can be challenging due to different operating structures. Intergovernmental bodies are bound by member state mandates,



while NGO's and development partners are more flexible. But civil society organizations are essential, especially for grass-roots work that governments can't always reach. Our strategic plan now offers a shared framework that helps align efforts and build effective, inclusive partnerships.

What's your vision for the future of Sport for Development in Africa?

The key is sustainability. Many initiatives have disappeared because they were donor dependent. We must embed sport into government structures and national development plans. By doing so, we ensure programs and infrastructure don't vanish

when funding ends. Mainstreaming S4D into public systems is essential for long-term success.

How can young leaders, especially young women, be better supported in this movement?

Youth must be part of the decision-making process, especially in sport. It's critical to create space for youth leadership, empower them socially and economically, and ensure their voices are heard. The African Union already promotes strong youth engagement, and we want to bring that energy into the sports sector. Young women especially must be empowered not just to participate, but to lead.



8 REWRITING THE RULES - TACKLING GENDER STEREOTYPES THROUGH SPORTS

For years, gender equality in sports was measured by numbers: how many girls participated, how many female coaches were trained. But true transformation goes deeper. It's not just about who plays. It's about who leads, who makes the rules, and who feels safe on and off the field.

That's why S4DA moved beyond gender inclusion to gender transformation, ensuring that power structures, leadership roles, and cultural mindsets evolved alongside participation rates. But one thing became clear: change cannot be copy-pasted. What worked in one country wasn't always the right approach to another. Instead of imposing external frameworks, S4DA focused on partner-led, community-driven change, amplifying the voices of those already leading the change.

At the pan-African level, partnerships with the African Union Sports Council (AUSC) and the Equal Play Effect (EPE) network helped anchor gender-transformative S4D policies continent-wide. At the regional and national level, more than 50 organizations partnered with S4DA worked to ensure that gender equality wasn't just a project component, but a structural commitment. They introduced safeguarding programs, coaching models that put women in leadership roles, and legal support structures for young girls facing discrimination.

On the ground, multipliers like coaches, teachers, and community leaders, became the driving force behind the gender-transformative approach. In schools and sports clubs, they e.g. championed mixed-gender teams, peer mentorship programs, and safe spaces where girls could take center stage, not just as players, but as leaders. More than just facilitators, these multipliers were role models, ensuring that every training session reinforced key life skills like confidence, teamwork, and resilience.

Engaging boys and young men was equally crucial. Through positive masculinity workshops, multipliers worked with young male athletes to challenge harmful gender norms, rethink traditional roles, and become allies in the movement for change. By embedding these principles into every session, they reshaped perspectives: one game, one conversation, one moment at a time.

By working from the grassroots to the policy level, S4DA helped redefine what gender equality (in sport) can mean, ensuring that long after the final whistle blows, the impact keeps growing.

“ VOICES FROM THE FIELD ”


“Boys and men in our community play a vital role in supporting gender-sensitive approaches, especially through the establishment of male change agents who actively challenge traditional gender norms. These male allies are instrumental in promoting gender equality by leading conversations, advocating for the inclusion of women and girls in sports and leadership roles, and modeling respectful behaviors. They work to break down stereotypes and encourage their peers to do the same.” Rufeya Juma, Project Coordinator, Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association (ZAFELA)



Zanzibar Female lawyers Association

Zanzibar Female lawyers Association (ZAFELA) has been entrusted with the responsibility to provide legal aid, legal counselling, legal rights and awareness. ZAFELA wants to achieve equality and timely legal services to women, disadvantaged groups, particularly to underprivileged women and children.





INTERVIEW WITH DORCAS AMAKOBÉ AND DEOGRATIA OKOKO (MTG)

Since 2002, Moving the Goalposts (MTG) has been a pioneer in using football as a powerful tool to empower girls and young women in Kenya's coastal region. What began as a bold initiative to break down gender barriers on the pitch has evolved into a holistic movement for gender equality, reproductive health, leadership development, and community transformation.

In this interview, Dorcas Amakobe (Executive Director) and Deogratia Okoko (Communications & Male Engagement Officer) reflect on MTG's journey, their unique community-led approach, and their role in the Equal Play Effect network. Together, they reveal how sport, when rooted in care, patience, and local leadership, can become a catalyst for deep, lasting change.

Moving The Goalposts (MTG) is a pioneer in using football for gender equality. What makes your approach unique, and why is sport such a powerful tool for empowering girls?

Dorcas Amakobe: Sport gives girls access to public spaces that were traditionally off-limits—places seen as male-dominated, like school fields or community pitches. In our coastal communities, girls were expected to stay at home, doing caregiving and household chores. So when we first introduced our program, there was resistance. Girls weren't welcome on the pitch. They were pushed off when boys arrived, sometimes even harassed.

Our response was intentional. We engaged community leaders, created safe entry points, and built understanding around why girls deserved to be there. We also worked with the girls themselves, helping them find the confidence to claim space.

One small but powerful act was giving girls a football of their own. When boys wanted to use it, they had to share the field. That flipped the script. Boys began watching, waiting their turn, and seeing girls not just as caretakers but as athletes.

But football is just the beginning. We layer our programs with sexual health education, economic empowerment, and male engagement, because we see each girl as a whole person. Sport is the door, but what happens beyond the pitch is where true transformation lies.

Can you share a story of a girl or a group whose journey through MTG really stood out to you? What changed for them?

Dorcas Amakobe: Rather than focusing on one girl, I want to share the story of an entire community—because sometimes, the transformation of a place is even more powerful than an individual story.

In a region called Ganda, with a predominantly Muslim population, we faced deep resistance when we first introduced MTG's program. Families returned our consent forms, saying football was against their religious and cultural beliefs. They feared it would make girls masculine, less marriageable—even claiming their daughters' bodies would change from playing.

For our team, it was frustrating. But we didn't walk away. Instead, we adapted —



slowed down, listened, and engaged religious and community leaders, especially male allies. One imam even welcomed girls expelled from other madrasas to his own, helping parents rethink what was possible.


Over time, trust grew. And just last year, we held the first-ever girls' football league in that community. It was a breakthrough seeing girls compete publicly in a space that had once denied them.

To us, success isn't just a girl scoring a goal. It's her feeling safe enough to step onto the field at all. It's her finding confidence, community, and even discovering other talents, -like music or public speaking, that grow from being in a supportive environment. We now have alumni who are coaches, board members, and leaders in their own right. But the real victory is how the community changed, how they began to see girls not as weak, but as powerful

MTG is part of the Equal Play Effect network. What motivated you to join, and how has being part of EPE influenced your work?

Deogratia Okoko: Joining the Equal Play Effect network has been a powerful opportunity for us. It's allowed MTG to amplify our impact, access technical support, and connect with peer organizations across Africa. Through EPE, we've had the space to reflect deeply on our gender action plan, identifying gaps and developing a clearer roadmap for change.





We're also contributing by sharing our expertise in male engagement and community outreach. Being part of the network has improved our capacity for joint advocacy and policy influence. For instance, we're now working with Kilifi County on a sexual and gender-based violence policy, addressing ongoing challenges like female genital mutilation.

Beyond strategy, EPE also pushed us to think about sustainability, how to keep collaborating and sharing even when funding is limited. It's helped us grow, not just as an organization, but as contributors to a wider movement.

Dorcas Amakobe: Our motivation to join EPE came after participating in the Global Goal 5 Accelerator led by Women Win, Common Goal, and Soccer Without Borders. We developed a gender action plan during that program and later launched Kenya's first-ever women-only CAF D license coaching course in partnership with the national football federation.

That experience showed us the power of structured pathways for women in sport leadership. But it also revealed areas where we needed to grow, like developing a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) policy and training all staff in gender-responsive engagement.

EPE gave us a platform to learn from others too, like how Soccer Without Borders trains leaders, or how Tackle uses drills to communicate empowerment messages. At the same time, we realized how much we could contribute, especially around safeguarding, which is still underdeveloped in some regions.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for MTG in the next five years, and what kind of support or partnerships would help make it a reality?

Deogratia Okoko: One of our top priorities

is deepening male engagement, ensuring that boys and men become active allies and champions of gender justice in sport. We've already seen how powerful this can be, especially through our involvement in the MenEngage conference and our broader work with EPE.

In the future, we want to see girls not only participating in sport but also taking leadership roles, as referees, coaches, and decision-makers. To make that happen, we need to work closely with partners at every level, county, national, and international, to embed gender equity into policies and ensure sustainability.

Safeguarding, sexual reproductive health, and gender-based violence prevention must be integral to every sports curriculum. And long-term, we aim to scale MTG's model beyond Kenya, while securing funding and policy alignment to make gender-transformative sport a norm, not an exception.

Dorcas Amakobe: I fully agree and I want to emphasize that while sports for development often focuses on bringing girls in, we must also look at the existing male-dominated systems and transform them from within. Engaging men and boys through sport is not an add-on, it's essential for systemic change.

MTG has over two decades of experience working with adolescent girls and young women. We now see ourselves stepping into a leadership role, supporting community coaches, grassroots programs, and other organizations across the Global South to access resources and training.

We're already contributing to national policy conversations in Kenya and have been invited to guide Olympic committees and sports federations on improving gender inclusion. In the next five years, we want to expand this advocacy work and ensure that women's voices in sport are heard globally, not just on the pitch, but in policy rooms and funding decisions too.



INTERVIEW WITH MARINA GNING (API AFRIQUE)

About API Afrique – API Afrique is a Senegal-based social enterprise that creates eco-friendly, reusable menstrual and baby care products while tackling taboos around menstruation and gender. Their work combines local production, health education, and advocacy to empower women and girls, promote sustainable practices, and foster social change in communities across West Africa.

Marina Gning – Co-Founder, API Afrique


Born in France and now based in Senegal, Marina Gning co-founded API Afrique to create a business rooted in care—for the environment, for communities, and for dignity. With a passion for social justice, Marina leads API Afrique's outreach, training, and advocacy efforts across Senegal.

What led you to create API Afrique and focus on menstrual health?

It started gradually. I had launched a company in France called Nappy that sold washable diapers. When we moved to Senegal, we realized these products needed to be locally made to be more accessible and to create jobs. Initially, the focus was on baby diapers, but it became clear that menstrual health

products sparked the most interest. We then began conducting focus groups and saw that girls were eager to talk about menstruation, despite the taboo. That's when we decided to integrate education alongside the products.

How do you approach such a taboo topic in a sensitive cultural context—and how has this shaped the way API Afrique changes societal attitudes?



You have to adapt. From the beginning, we worked closely with mothers, girls, and gynecologists to understand how to introduce the topic of menstruation without creating resistance. One of the most important lessons was that separating menstruation from sexuality is essential—especially in Senegal, where speaking too openly about these issues can cause people to shut down. So we begin with the basics: positive, non-shocking messages about the body and how it works. That opens the door to deeper conversations. Our strategy is step-by-step education, always using reassuring and empowering language.

By creating tools that normalize the topic, we're slowly shifting mindsets—in schools, in families, and in communities. It's a long process, but we've seen the change.

Your journey with S4DA started in an unusual way— Catherine Daraspe met you at a market in Senegal. Can you take us back to that moment? How did this chance encounter grow into a deep collaboration?

We did a lot of market presentations in Dakar at the beginning to introduce our products and make them known, especially because they were different from what people were used to. I think that's where Catherine and I first connected. I remember she later came to visit the company, which really opened a space for discussion.

She's someone who likes to see things on the ground. From that visit, we began working together—starting with a small project and eventually developing many initia-

tives like awareness sessions, the Weerwi edutainment series, and the father-daughter exhibition. The collaboration grew very naturally from a place of shared ideas and mutual engagement.

What has been a highlight of your work with S4DA?

Several, but one that stands out is the S4D workshop we hosted for our team. It revealed a lot about internal dynamics and communication. The Weerwi video series and the father-daughter photo exhibition were also very impactful. These projects helped us communicate through channels young people actually use, like YouTube, and to address topics like positive masculinity in a relatable way.

Your team is almost entirely women artisans. What has been the most rewarding part of building this workforce?

From the start, we wanted to create decent jobs for women and support their financial autonomy. We now have around 25 women and just 3 or 4 men on the team. The biggest challenge has been keeping women long-term, especially after they marry or have children. Family responsibilities are intense—cooking, events, childcare. Despite this, many of them are proud to come to work. We try to support them with things like longer maternity leave or nursery help, but we also question whether the standard model of a "good job" really fits their realities. Sometimes flexibility and understanding matter more than contracts.

What was a defining challenge you faced in growing API Afrique, and how did you overcome it?

Scaling up has been the hardest part. Starting was easy, but growing a social enterprise means suddenly needing to manage everything professionally—HR, logistics, admin. We had to train most of our team on the job, which takes time.

Delegating was also hard; it took us a while to realize how much investment it would take to build a strong middle management layer. But we're getting there, and learning a lot along the way.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for API Afrique in the coming years? And how can partnerships like S4DA continue to support your mission?

Before COVID-19, we wanted to grow into a large manufacturing company. But after the crisis, we shifted our vision. Now, we want to remain a human-sized company—focused on high-quality products and meaningful impact. We're open to expanding distribution in West Africa, but we want to keep our core values.

What we need most is support in training our team, building awareness around menstrual health, and improving our production chain. And of course, buying our products. Sales and distribution are what will make all of this sustainable. NGOs and partners play a huge role by helping us reach people who can't afford our products, and by supporting education and awareness campaigns.





9 CROSSING THE FINISH LINE AND CATCHING A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

Every day, children and youth across the continent experience the S4D impact firsthand, on the sports field, in classrooms, and within their communities. Whether used to teach health, climate awareness, or life skills, sport for development becomes even more transformative in societies striving for more inclusion and openness. Fair play, teamwork, and leadership are not just game tactics. They are the building blocks of resilience and empathy, qualities desperately needed in today's volatile and uncertain world. With the right mindset and the right methods, sport can foster gender equality and inspire a new generation to challenge harmful norms.

The foundations are in place. Partner governments, organizations, and development agencies now have access to a proven, scalable approach. At the same time, the global sport sector is booming, contributing 2–3% of global GDP and growing faster than the world economy itself. This opens new pathways for innovation, investment, and impact.

In Africa, S4D is poised to grow into a movement that is not only effective, but deeply rooted in ownership, equity, and purpose. Its continued success depends on strong political leadership, committed civil society actors and a shared belief in the potential of every young person. Many organizations have already embraced this journey. More are joining every day.

And that, more than anything, is good news! For the future of our youth, and for the future we want to build together.



“ VOICES FROM THE FIELD ”

“S4DA transitioned from a grassroots initiative (1,000 Chances for Africa) active in multiple African countries into a regional project. It now systematically advises governments and civil society partners on policies, strategies, and value-based sport for development programs, with a focus on gender transformative change and adherence to safeguarding and do no harm principles.” Kristin Richter, Regional Coordinator East Africa within the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Nairobi, Kenya

“The legacy of the EPE Africa network does not only lie in action plans or trainings—it lies in the power of community. Partners connected across borders, shared struggles, and built solutions. The movement will grow beyond the project cycle.” Mariam Ibrahim, Gender Advisor in the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Eschborn, Germany

“The journey has been dynamic, each learning step taking us to higher levels. What started as a local project now works across community, national, and continental levels. It's the interplay of all these levels that makes S4DA truly impactful.” Frankline Olukohe, Regional Advisor East Africa within the GIZ Sport for Development in Africa project, Stone Town, Zanzibar





10 TOOLS & RESOURCES: A MOVEMENT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU

Sport for Development in Africa (S4DA) is more than a project. It's a living, growing ecosystem. Over the past 11 years, S4DA has co-created a wide array of practical tools, guides, and learning materials with partners across the continent. These resources are open-access, field-tested and ready to be used, adapted, and scaled, whether you're a coach, educator, policymaker, or grassroots organization.

And the best part? It's all just a click away. On our website, you can explore tools by theme or by country, from all-in-one kits to drill books, lesson plans, safeguarding checklists, gender-sensitive curricula, and even templates for maintaining sports grounds sustainably.

Ready to explore?

All tools and resources are available for free at www.sport-for-development.com

Discover by theme, country, or topic. Adapt them, use them and help shape the future of sport for development.



FOR PRACTITIONERS & TRAINERS

- **S4D Training Manuals** – Step-by-step guides for coaches, integrating life skills into sport.
- **Gender-Transformative Coaching Guidelines** – Approaches to foster equality and challenge harmful norms on the pitch.
- **Safeguarding in Sport Handbook** – A go-to resource for creating safe spaces for all children and youth

FOR SCHOOLS & EDUCATORS

- **Lesson Plans for Life Skills through Sport** – Fun, practical learning that goes beyond the classroom.
- **Curriculum Integration Guides** – Examples of how S4D is embedded in national education systems.

FOR POLICYMAKERS & INSTITUTIONS

- **Policy Briefs & National Strategies** – Evidence and examples for making S4D part of development agendas.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation Frameworks**
Track what matters, scale what works.



FEATURED TOOLS

Safeguarding in Sport: A Practitioner's Guide
Created in collaboration with the African Union Sports Council, this hands-on guide equips coaches, teachers, and organizations with practical steps to ensure sport environments are safe, inclusive, and protective, especially for children, girls, and marginalized groups.



Boîte à Images "Père(s)-Fille(s)" – Senegal
This powerful visual toolkit invites fathers and daughters to explore gender equality together. Designed to spark deep, transformative conversations at the community level, it's storytelling with a purpose and a fresh way to shift norms from the inside out.



The Knowledge Box

Think of it as your ultimate Sport for Development starter pack. From managing sports infrastructure to designing inclusive training sessions, the Knowledge Box brings together over a decade of learning, tools, and blueprints all in one place.





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Im Auftrag des



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