

Using sports and art to discuss gender-based violence with children and young people with disabilities – Kenya

Organization: KEFEADO (Kenya Female Advisory Organization)

Background

According to the 2009 Kenyan Housing and Population Census, 10% (4.44 million people) of the Kenyan population are persons with disabilities, and half of that population is female.¹ Data from the UN Women database on violence against women indicate that:

- 39% of women aged 15-49 years old experience physical and/or sexual domestic violence at least once in their lifetime
- 23% of women aged 20-24 years old were married before the age of 18
- 21% of women aged 15-49 years old were victims of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)²



Easter Okech, Executive Director

KEFEADO was created in 1994 as a national organization championing gender and women's rights with a focus on girls. The organization's goal is to obtain a violence-free society where all individuals are respected regardless of their gender, disability or any other discrimination factors. Positioning itself at the intersection of gender and disability in particular, KEFEADO worked with women's organizations and started developing its expertise through cooperation with DPOs such as Abled Differently³ and KADDNET,⁴ as well as with individual women and girls with disabilities. KEFEADO is also part of the Feminist Forum, which is a local network based in

Kisumu that addresses intersectional issues and brings together women, LGBTQIA+ organizations and persons with disabilities. The Feminist Forum acts as a platform to advocate for policy and legal reform, as well as to stimulate knowledge sharing between groups working on different rights.

What happened?

During the 2014 United Nations "16 Days of Activist against GBV," on "Orange Day," a day dedicated to raising awareness and the prevention of violence against women and girls, KEFEADO founded the good practice of using sports and art to discuss GBV with children and young people with and without disabilities. The practice is for girls and boys between 10-24 years old. It also focuses on children and young people who are attending school, not attending school, or in boarding schools, where children are particularly at risk of GBV. Individuals with visual and physical impairments are involved as well as people living with albinism and hearing

¹ [Kenya National Bureau of Statistics](#)

² The UN women's, [global database on violence against women: Kenya page](#)

³ Organization of women with disabilities based in Kisumu, Kenya

⁴ Kisumu Action Disability Development Network, organization of young people with disabilities based in Kisumu, Kenya

impairments, although the latter are under-represented. The practice includes sports, discussion sessions, and art.

Sports are used as a tool to counterbalance gender inequality, which is one of the root causes of gender-based violence (GBV) and disability-related stigma. By allowing both genders to play traditionally female and male sports, KEFEADO helps build a strong foundation for girls and boys to foster a sustainable, daily mindset that is not influenced by negative gender norms and roles. KEFEADO also uses sports to fight GBV by helping girls develop the physical skills and strength they may need to improve their self-protection.

Discussion sessions, held in safe spaces in schools, take place at least once a month. This activity targets schools with integrated learning (with designated classrooms for children with disabilities), schools without integrated learning (for children without disabilities), and schools specifically for children with disabilities. Some of these discussions target both girls and boys, and focus on sexual development and sexuality-related issues such as sexual harassment, reproductive and health rights, and sexually transmitted infections and diseases. Additionally, boys are taught about gender equality, gender roles, and male engagement.

Art is also used as a way of communicating messages about gender roles, sexuality, and violence to young adults. Drama and painting activities are used to engage girls and boys on GBV and sexuality issues.

What changed?

The organization's members point to positive outcomes such the impact of the practice at local level.

Be gender responsive with KEFEADO

NO GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Include everyone in sport and art activities:

- Promoting gender equality and inclusion
- Challenging gender norms, roles and stereotypes
- Creating safe spaces and open discussion

EXPANDING IMPACT: SCALING KEFEADO

- Advocacy towards organizations/ ministries
- Networking: Identifying organizations

Notable Successes

1. The approval of the 2014 Kisumu Disability Act entitled “The Kisumu County Persons Living with Disabilities bill.”⁵ Caroline Adwanda, a political leader who has worked with KEFEADO at the policy level since 2013, was instrumental in drafting the act, which provides content on the rights and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and equal opportunities.
2. Both girls and boys also indicated that they developed increased awareness following the activities and open discussions which allowed them to discuss previously taboo subjects such as sexuality, LGBTQIA+ identity, and reproductive health.
3. Created a unique space where people of the same ages can engage with each other through sports, discussions, and art.
4. Young persons trained as mentors by members of KEFEADO to facilitate conversations with young girls and boys with disabilities. This creates intergenerational and intersectional mentorship.
5. Developed a global and local network with several organizations to create policy change at county and national levels.

Key Success Factors

1. **Connecting individuals** of the same age group, regardless of other characteristics, and using sports, art and fun activities to communicate messages of inclusion, equality and empowerment.
2. **Developing young persons with disabilities into mentors** thus creating intergenerational and intersectional mentorship.
3. **Having a local and global network** shows willingness to build partnerships to adapt activities and become a true ally for women and girls with disabilities. The large number of activities in the county and the large number of individuals targeted contributes to creating an enabling environment for policy change at both county and national levels.

⁵ [Kisumu Country Gazette Supplement No.26 \(Bills No.21\), 2014](#)