



Redirecting lives and shaping destinies through sport

Blessed Ziso

Kuyenda Rural Youth Collective from Zimbabwe

As a teacher at Terry Goss High School, I observed that a lot of girls were prematurely dropping out of school. With my understanding of the importance of education, I dug deep into finding out the causes of the high drop-out rates. Poverty is central to girls' failure to complete basic education and less to no mentorship and encouragement shift their focus to distractions. Socio-cultural factors play a major role as they are embedded in patriarchal systems that propel gender biases that promote premature child marriages and forced unions.

In my community, girls' dropout rates increase when enrolling in high school and during the secondary years. The fate of the girls would either be to look for employment as house helpers where they are exploited or be in the pitfalls of forced and early marriages. I started the Triangle Volleyball Club to help eliminate child and premature marriages. The Triangle Club is a safe space for development and is used as a nurturing platform for girls through sport. Skills development and nurturing talent is the core function of the club to divert and occupy girl's minds from distractions.

The training games are aimed at improving the

general fitness and health of the girls and creating opportunities for them outside of school and society norms and expectations. Two to three training sessions are done weekly, and mentors and speakers are invited to speak on issues like sexual reproductive health rights, peer pressure and education. As a starter-up club, we hope to embark on a practical skills training program and entrepreneurial development initiative where girls are empowered and emancipated to self-sustain. Through this club, three girls have managed to re-enrol in school as part-time and continuing education. Our impact is not only to advocate for the importance of education but also to empower the girls. The girls played Terry Goss High School's under-20 girls' team and scooped second place in Masvingo. Two of the girls played for the under-17 Beach Volleyball Games and were in third position in Zimbabwe.

The volleyball club is a platform where girls are excelling beyond education and their self-esteem and confidence are being restored. We envision our girls being on the national team and making a living out of the technique and skills acquired at Triangle Volleyball Club. We are redirecting lives and shaping destinies through sports and engagements.