

Final report of the implementation of the grant on breaking taboos against girls' participation in games and Esports to promote gender justice.

Learning Objective : **To break taboos on girls' participation in games and sports to promote gender justice in Lake Tanganyika.**

Donors : **ONSIDE/ WOMEN WIN**

Implementation Organization: **Action des Volontaires d'Innovation pour le Développement, AVID**

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the activities carried out and lessons learned in the implementation of the "Think a Think" learning project on "breaking taboos that prevent girls from participating in games and esports to promote gender justice" in the Lake Tanganyika coastline in eastern DR Congo. However, the Lake Tanganyika coastline is one of the areas where the rights of young girls to participate in sports and electronic games remain in jeopardy due to the weight of customs and traditions. Despite the various interventions made by actors of change in the area such as AVID-DRC, the situation is evolving at a snail's pace. Thanks to a learning grant from ONSIDE/WOMEN WIN, AVID-DRC has set up activities to engage in discussions with the holders of customary power in order to consider the possibility of breaking the taboo that prevents young girls in this region from enjoying this right to participate fully like other human beings in games and sports. This grant was part of the concern to promote gender justice that remains blocked due to cultural constraints and backward customs in this post-conflict region. In this, AVID-DRC used its approach of "participatory dialogue: let's give a voice to all," in particular with the holders of customary power, the parents of the girls, the local authorities, the girls themselves, the people in charge of the sports sector in the region, the gender, family, and children's office, etc. As a result, 2 major activities were carried out with the grant, including a radio report and the organization of a forum for popular expression.

- What are the perceptions of the customary authorities on the participation of young girls in video games, electronics and other sports activities?
- What do girls in the Lake Tanganyika coastal region think about customary prohibitions and their parents' perceptions?
- What do we learn from the forum of popular expression on the right of young girls to participate in electronic games, video games and sports activities?
- What can be done to overcome these barriers?

The answers to these three questions are the subject of this brief report produced by the team of the organization Action des Volontaires d'Innovation pour le Développement, AVID -DRC.

II. Production of a report/magazine

At the very beginning, our two journalists spoke with the various customary power holders, including men and women, but also with young girls. These interviews, which led to the production of a magazine of more than ten minutes, returned to the question of why the custom forbids young girls to participate in electronic games, video and sports activities. Different interventions were collected from the customary power holders, where they mentioned that games and sports activities distract the girl from her real work as a woman. Some of them declared that the girl's job is to stay next to her mother so that she is prepared for the life of the cup. And she should not waste her time playing games and sports. Besides, sports can block a girl from finding a husband because she will be considered as a boy.

On their part, the girls wished and asked the customary power holders and their parents to let them be free to participate in games and sports. One of them mentioned that her parents had forbidden her to attend school because she had participated in a soccer match.

The magazine was broadcast on our two partner radio stations, Radio Tanganyika Espoirs des Opprimés and Radio Ngoma ya Amani in the implementation area.

III. Organization of a forum for popular expression.

On December 21, 2022, in Mboko, in the meeting room of the SIMBI hotel, a workshop for the exchange of opinions was held, which we called "Forum of Popular Expression. The objective of this workshop



was not only to physically meet the holders of the customary power, to exchange with them and the whole layer on the customary prohibitions aiming at blocking the road to the participation of the young girls in the electronic games, video and sport but also to see in which measure of the possible some of these prohibitions can be abolished in order to authorize, to support that the young girls can take part in these ranges of the games and sports in the strategy of enjoyment of their rights like all the other human beings. An expert Mrs. LAHELI NA'ABWE was

recruited to facilitate this one-day workshop which brought together the customary power, the sports officials of the region, the parents of the girls, the girls themselves, the local authorities, etc. Just then, the magazine was once again tossed/played in the room having come back on the



perceptions of the customary power on the non-participation of the young girls in sports activities, electronic games and videos. It is after the hearing of the magazine in a collective way that was opened the debate inviting the participants to give their points of view and perceptions not only on this state of affairs but also to give the personal or customary reasons preventing or prohibiting

the young girl of the littoral of the Lake Tanganyika to take part in electronic games and sports activities. Several participants intervened in the discussion. Just at the beginning, 70% of the interventions were against the participation of young girls in electronic games and sports activities while only 20% agreed or agreed with the free participation of young girls in electronic games and sports activities.



For some, girls should not be interested in games and sports activities because they have to spend most of their time with their mothers to be prepared for marriage and how to manage their homes, others added that games and sports activities do not take them anywhere and it is just a waste of time and it is for their destruction.

For those who agree that girls participate in games and sports activities for the good of these girls, they mentioned that, sports and electronic games, can allow them to meet other people, gives them flexibility, it is also a way for her to keep the body healthy.

From the interventions retained during this workshop, we noted that, the custom, the customs and a bad comprehension/interpretation of the enjoyment of the rights by young girls are at the base of blocking the young girls to participate in electronic games and sports activities and to fully enjoy their rights as such.

After collecting the perceptions of the participants and the reasons for the non-participation of girls in games and sports activities, the facilitator took the floor and evaluated the different prohibitions and reasons given. Here the facilitator first explained that men as well as women are equal before the law (law n° 15/03 of August 1, 2015) and therefore the rights that young boys enjoy to participate in games and sports activities are also for young girls, she then showed that the Congolese law recognizes the practice of physical and sports activities as a fundamental



right for all (Article 2 of law n° 11/023 of December 24, 2011). She also cited Article 31 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (ICRC) which emphasizes the importance of equal access to leisure activities and the right to play and engage in sports activities. The facilitator not only presented what the law says about the participation of girls in electronic games and sports activities, but also about its benefits for the health of each individual, including the development of the capacity for creativity and the maintenance of good health.

It is here that the facilitator made an appeal to the customary power holders, parents and other members of the community to let the girls enjoy their rights like all other human beings because arresting them is a form of violation not only of the law but also a violation of human rights.

After the facilitator made this appeal, the customary leaders and other participants were able to internalize this act and ended up thanking AVID and its partner for having organized this meeting in their zone in order to strengthen gender-based social justice through the electronic games and sports activities approach. They said that it is because of a misunderstanding of gender that girls are excluded from electronic games and sports activities and asked the organization to increase training on this subject.



The workshop was closed with the announcement of the sports tournaments and games organized in the project followed by the thanks for the participation of everyone.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED

- Many of the workshop participants only considered soccer as a sport and had difficulty understanding electronic games.
- At the reflection meeting, two women participants said that they used to play soccer when they were single but stopped right after marriage because their men did not agree that they should even play the sport. However, she said, and I quote, "I can also play if my husband agrees, but we have to make him aware first.
- During the discussions, the participants realized the existence of a diversity of games and sports that already exist in the custom but unfortunately have been almost forgotten today. They mentioned such games as "kalubi", "wambuzi", "ejuwer", "lukamba".

- For many, games and sports activities are synonymous with the destruction of morals and prostitution of young girls; this calls for strong sensitization on the part of community members so that they can understand the necessity and importance
- Parents still need to be more aware of the right of girls to participate in sports and games. A female participant stated, "...many people are still unaware of this right, so it would be better if parents were sensitized so that they understand that girls have the right to participate in electronic games and sports activities just like boys and not just to prepare for marriage".

V. SUCCESS STORY

- After the explanations given by the facilitator not only on the right of young girls to participate in games and sports activities, but especially the benefits of sports and games on health and personal development; the notable and traditional chief MISABEO WA NUNDA took the floor and launched an appeal to the village chiefs, parents and other participants of the workshop to let young girls participate freely in electronic games and sports activities. He also praised the activities of the project, and I quote; *"I thank the AVID organization for organizing this workshop. It would be better for all of us who are here to take with great consideration the lessons received here and share them with those who are not here. Let the girls participate in games and sports activities; they also have this right and it is useful for their life...."*
- A female participant, who used to forbid her daughter to participate in electronic and video games, Mrs. SOFIA Bilombele, expressed her appreciation for the project's activities and indicated that she is ready to participate in the sports tournaments and games organized in the project.

List of some customary prohibitions and their causes preventing girls from participating in electronic games and sports activities

N°	Customary prohibition	Cause or reason
01	Women in general and girls in particular are not allowed to wear panties or clothes that allow certain parts of their body to be seen in public, this is against the custom.	Games and sports can lead girls into prostitution.
02	In the Babembe custom, there are female games and sports like, the game of fact, rope games, these games are appropriate for young girls and not the electronic games, soccer and others	A girl should not be brutal and mean to the man but when she also starts to participate in such games and sports activities like men, she might be mean and start to match the man.
03	The girl should only stay at home to do the housework to prepare her for the life of the home tomorrow and not waste her time playing games and other sports activities. The woman's place is in the kitchen	According to custom, young girls must stay close to their mothers so that they can learn how they will live once they are married.

Conclusion

We thank the donor ONSIDE GAMING / WOMEN WIN for their financial, technical and moral support which allowed us to implement this learning to promote gender justice through sports and electronic games in the Lake Tanganyika coastline with the main objective of discussing with the customary power and other community members to abolish some prohibitions preventing girls from participating in electronic games, video and sports activities. The struggle is not yet over, it remains great. In view of the results obtained by this grant, we can say that some prohibitions and grey areas have been removed and we have obtained authorization from the holders of customary power to allow young girls to participate in games and sports at the local level. Currently, these girls are already participating in training sessions and soccer tournaments as well as in electronic games such as tetris and online checkers. However, there are still some grey areas that need to be filled by strengthening sensitization, as even the customary authorities wished, in order to make the whole community understand that young girls also have the right to participate in electronic games, video games and other sports activities. The above lessons learned and success stories were collected and used as guidelines and gaps or needs remaining within the community. This period of implementation of our learning, ended with great satisfaction in relation to the activities planned and carried out despite some difficulties related to the context of the implementation area and the country in general. There are still many needs in the reinforcement of equitable social justice within our community where one category of people (girls) is still considered inferior to the others. In spite of this, the organization Action des Volontaires d'Innovation pour le Développement, AVID asbl is determined to work alongside the community and accompany them to reverse this trend based on innovative activities and actions.

This remains the fruit of all.

For AVID - DRC
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