

Engaging the Community

Organisations around the world that use sport as a tool to build leadership in adolescent girls have made it clear that part of the **essential strategy for designing and implementing a girls' sport programme is effectively engaging the local community.**

Not all of the challenges faced by organisations are the same, nor are the organisations' strategies to engage their communities the same. Many have learned that what works in engaging the community has **evolved over time**, and have **adapted** and **improved** their strategies, and because of this, have created more enabling environments for the girls in their programmes.

Where are **you**?

This section will explore key strategies in engaging the community, while also turning to practical case studies from various regions around the world.

In this PDF, you will explore the following topics:

- 01 What is Community Engagement?
- 02 Girl-led Engagement
- 03 Community Groups and Stakeholders
- 04 Strategies for Engaging the Community

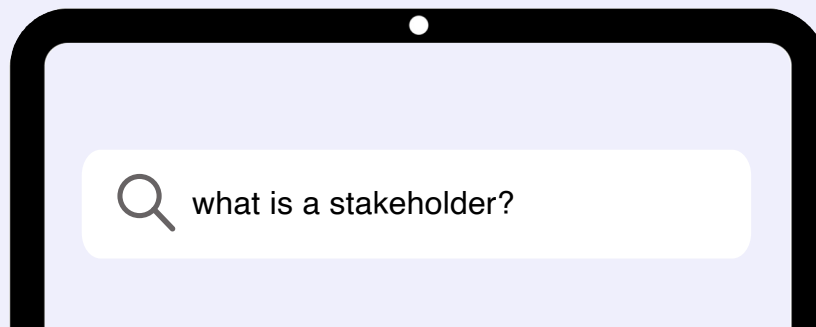


Image source: One Culture Nation

01 What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is about building, developing, and maintaining effective relationships with people through all of the **critical aspects of human interaction – dialogue, patience, persistence, care, consideration, and clarity of purpose.** It means taking time to listen to people and having the flexibility to deal with potential conflicts or problems, and being creative in finding ways to address those problems with the community, not in spite of them. **Community engagement is the foundation of any organisational strategy** and, as experienced by many of our partner organisations, an accelerating factor for sustainable programmes.

This process of learning from a community is not a single event; it is a constant interaction that will continue throughout the life of a programme. Degrees of support vary across **stakeholder** groups over time, and community engagement is not fixed, but is fluid and changes. Many organisations agree that community engagement has changed throughout the life of their programmes.



A **stakeholder** is any individual, group, or organisation with an interest or stake in the outcome of a decision or programme.

Although community engagement should be a strategy throughout the life of your girls' sport programme, it is important to keep **in mind that in many places, by carrying out a girls' sport programme you may be challenging perceptions about what girls' roles are in that community.** Although this guide illustrates that a promising practice is to include the community in decisions and the process of implementing a girls' sport programme, it also cautions that participation in the development process can be difficult to balance when trying to challenge existing social norms (check out this [Naz Foundation India case study](#) to learn more).



Defining Community

How does your organisation define community? It's not the same for all organisations. Communities can take many forms: for some, their community is a village, for others, a religious group, and for others still, the community is a refugee camp. Gaining the support of any community that your participants are part of is invaluable. Organisations' definitions of community are varied:¹



Consider

Women Win, with input from programme partners, defines community as all of the stakeholders and community members who influence the lives of the adolescent girls participating in sport programmes. The geographical area that makes up this community differs for every programme; in some cases it may be a village, in some it may be more than one village. This definition not only includes parents, teachers, community leaders, both international and local organisations, peers, and coaches, but also, most importantly, the girls themselves.

Note: This influence or impact may not necessarily be positive.

¹These quotes are from interviews and surveys from sport for development practitioners around the world.



Case Studies: Naz Foundation and Magic Bus

The [Naz Foundation](#) (India) reports that when they initiate a sport for development programme in a new community, there is very little community engagement in the beginning. Naz really begins engaging the community once the programme is running, through events and festivals as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the programme. On the other hand, [Magic Bus](#) (India) takes a different approach and involves the community heavily at the planning stage of their programmes. They ask the community to nominate young volunteer coaches, which builds support and community ownership from the very beginning.



02 Girl-led Engagement

Community engagement for girls' sport programmes can be a difficult endeavour. On the one hand, it is essential that on **some level your community is involved in the planning and implementation of your programme**, if that programme is to be sustainable. On the other hand, in many contexts, the simple fact of girls participating in sport is challenging gender norms and, therefore, draws negative reactions from certain community members. It is important to remember that although you want to engage the community as much as possible in order to change perceptions and create sustainability, the first duty is to the safety and rights of the girls. **It is imperative that the girls' voices are not drowned out in the process of engaging the rest of the community.**

Many of the organisations consulted in writing this section cited that the most important community group for the success of their programmes is the girls themselves. The girls not only support each other and bring more girl participants into the programme, but also spread information and knowledge to their peers, classmates, and families.



Digital Storytelling

Digital Storytelling (DST) is a workshop-based methodology that focuses on any person's ability to share aspects of their life story. It is grounded in the storytellers' control over the medium – **words, images and audio** – so that the process of learning and production is as powerful for the storyteller as the end product is for the audience. Using formal storytelling tools can be a powerful way to engage the community and for girls to have their voices heard. Digital and audio storytelling are powerful methods in which girls learn to tell their own stories, edit them, and add media. If girls are proud of these stories and want to share them, it can be a great tool for a programme's community engagement strategy with the media, community leaders, parents and caregivers, and other stake-holders.





Consider

As part of their strategy to empower girls and young women to be leaders in their communities, Women Win began implementing Digital Storytelling workshops in 2013.

Through an intense 5-day DST workshop, Women Win equips girls and young women with technical skills, knowledge, and opportunities to share their personal stories of transformation through sport. These may include the challenges they faced, how they overcame them, and the impact sport has had in their lives. In telling/sharing their stories, participants create a sense of ownership of their experiences, discover how much experience and learning they have in common with others, advance solidarity and understanding, and ultimately become visible change-agents in their communities. It is for this reason that DST is an important aspect to Women Win's community engagement strategy. Visit Women Win's [DST Platform](#) to hear the stories of young women around the world.

For more information about DST workshops, please contact Learn@womenwin.org.

Digital Story Spotlights



● **Football Saved My Life**

For Linda, football was her only chance to avoid an early marriage with a much older man. Succeeding in a football competition was the critical point in her life that allowed her to shape a future very different from that of most girls in her community.

*By Linda Choeun
Salt Academy, Cambodia*

● **I Believe...I Can**

In the beginning Laxmi didn't have either her family's or her community's support to follow her dream to become an athlete. Inspired by famous female athletes, however, she practised hard and eventually managed to change their opinion about what a girl can or cannot do.

*By Laxmi Shakya
The Naz Foundation Trust, India*

● **How Football Saved My Life**

Football came into Furaha's life when she was in despair, craving to go to school but not being able to. Thanks to football Furaha managed to go to school, become a coach and earn an allowance, becoming in this way a role model for her younger siblings and the girls in the community.

*By Furaha Pascal
Moving the Goalposts, Kenya*



Case Study: Polycom Development

[Polycom Development](#) (Kenya) pointed out that girls go home and talk about what they learn at sport and life skills sessions, which results in getting parents' support for the programmes and also often results in younger siblings wanting to attend. The strongest voice in engaging with the community, and the most important voice, is that of the girl participants themselves.

03 Community Groups and Stakeholders

Your community engagement strategy is dependent on the community groups and stakeholders who potentially impact on the lives of the girls in your programme. These groups and stakeholders will vary by country, programme, and location within a country. For example, in religiously devout communities, religious leaders are very important stakeholders who often have a vested interest in monitoring the role of girls in their community, and have the ability to bring a girls' sport programme to a halt. Another important stakeholder group is parents and caregivers, whose permission and support is essential to girls' participation in sport. Oftentimes, fathers and mothers (or male caregivers and female caregivers) have different motivations for keeping their daughters out of sport programmes or different reasons why they might support their daughters.

It is essential you understand these motivations and reasons before creating a strategy, avoiding a 'one size fits all' approach.



Create a Stakeholder Map

There are many different ways to involve the various stakeholders in a community in order to gain their support for a programme. When planning a community engagement strategy for any girls' sport programme, the essential first step is for you to create a list or map of all potential stakeholders and groups in the community in which you will work. Once you agree on the players involved, you can create approaches for each group individually. Involving the girls in this process of mapping the stakeholders in the community will also allow you to understand who they view as the most important supporters, or opponents, to their participation in sport.

For exercises on community mapping, take a look at the [Girls in Motion Toolkit Annexes](#), which offer a variety of community mapping and engagement activities, particularly in the context of designing a girls' sport programme in humanitarian contexts.



Case Study: Moving The Goalposts

[Moving The Goalposts](#) (Kenya) visits caregivers and helps them to create daily schedules with their daughters so that the girls can both attend sport sessions and complete chores at home. Other organisations have taken steps to provide childcare at sport sessions so that girls can bring their young siblings with them.



Case Study: Kembatta Mentti Gezzima

Experience from our partner organisations dealing with sensitive and possible culturally contentious issues has shown that it is important to involve the community in programme planning. For example, in implementing a programme to reduce female genital mutilation (cutting) in Ethiopia, [Kembatta Mentti Gezzima](#) found that rather than replicating an approach from another context, it was more effective to seek local community input on possible solutions to the problem of female genital mutilation. They invited stakeholders to community discussion groups in which they created a space for open discussion, with agreement that there would be no judgement or intimidation on whatever was brought up by participants. The result of these open discussions has been a reduction in cases of female genital mutilation in the community as well as new initiatives started by community members to further address this issue.¹

¹ Womenkind Worldwide Report: <http://www.womankind.org.uk/>



Case Study: Youth Empowerment Foundation

[Youth Empowerment Foundation](#) (Nigeria) has regular meetings with local government officials to inform them about the success of their programme and to build their relationship with these leaders for continued future support.

Parents and Caregivers

Caregivers are the single greatest barrier or accelerator to a girls' participation in a sport programme: in most programmes around the world, they are the key. This is especially important in contexts where it is not normal for women or girls to play sport or be seen in athletic clothing or out on a field. Caregivers also influence other caregivers, and if they understand the benefits of your programme and feel that they are a part of it, they will be more likely to encourage other caregivers to send their daughters to the programme. It is critical to earn the trust and support of caregivers and it is in each girl's best interest for your programme directors and coaches to be on the same 'team' as caregivers in order to avoid having a participant feel like they must choose between participating in sport and obeying the wishes of their caregivers.



Image source: Safe Spaces, Kenya

Common Reasons Preventing Caregivers from Supporting Sport Programmes...

Daily chores and work at home that girls are expected to do; unpaid care work.

Fear that neighbours will look down on the family if their daughter is participating in sport, or that girls will be undesirable for marriage.

Fear of girls' safety when they have to travel long distances to trainings.

Fear of physical injuries.

Belief that girls will become sexually active and as a result become pregnant because of playing sport in public.

Dislike of sport clothing because it is too revealing (e.g., football shorts).

Caregivers wanting to participate in sport themselves and therefore unhappy with space being given to daughters.

Perception that participation reduces time for girls' studies.

Belief that organisations are benefiting financially because girls attend the programme.

Worry that the place where the girls play is not safe.

Lack of exposure to/experience with sport (especially for women).



Incentives or Motivations for Engagement

It is important to identify what would motivate caregivers to support a girls' sport programme in their community. Having this knowledge will make it easier to engage them. Incentives or motivations might include:



Improved access to education for their daughters.



Community recognition for their involvement with the organisation.



Their own interest in participating in sport.



Potential of more spaces for sport in the community.



Food at community events.



Household items, food, or clothing for families in need of basic necessities.



Strategies for Engagement

- Educate caregivers about all aspects of your programme and listen to their concerns.
- Be absolutely transparent and honest at all times.
- If caregivers have a lack of knowledge on life skills issues, give them information or organise a session for them on the life skills information that you provide to their daughters through sport.
- Ask caregivers for permission for their daughters to participate through consent forms or verbal consent. This demonstrates that you respect their role in their daughters' lives.

- Assure caregivers of the physical and emotional safety of the girls while participating in the programme.
- Invite caregivers to occasionally participate in or observe sessions, and attend programme events.
- Visit the home of participants regularly, especially if a girl has been absent or if you become aware of a conflict with her caregivers.
- Create a committee for caregivers in which they can meet and make recommendations for the programme, as well as have their own defined position within the programme.
- Ask caregivers for feedback on the success of the programme throughout the year.
- Ask about the skills or knowledge they would like their girls to attain through the programme.
- Work with caregivers to develop a daily schedule for their daughters so that they can do all of their household chores and also attend the sport programme. Teach girls time management skills to balance home responsibilities and sport participation.
- Organise friendly competitions between girls and caregivers, such as mother/daughter or father/daughter sport days.
- Give caregivers small income-earning opportunities by training them to serve as officials, organise events, or maintain facilities.
- Utilise and engage caregivers who are enthusiastic from the onset. One great strategy is to use caregivers who are on board with your programme as advocates who can talk to skeptical caregivers.
- Identify and utilise different strategies for male and female caregivers. Male caregivers often have an idea of the power of sport and its impacts since they themselves may have played or still play. Leverage this by highlighting their own experiences and what sport could do for their daughters. On the other hand, many female caregivers may have never kicked or caught a ball themselves. Organise sport days for them so that they too experience the joy of sport.



Case Study: Moving the Goalposts

[Moving the Goalposts](#) recognised that caregivers would often not give consent to send girls to their football and life skills programme. Instead of telling the caregivers they were wrong, MTG staff visited the homes of the girls and asked the caregivers why they were not allowing the girls to attend. One of the reasons they discovered was that caregivers did not think that their daughters had enough time to complete all of their household chores and to attend football sessions. To address this, MTG staff now sit down with caregivers and girls to make a plan or schedule for their days so that their time is planned and they can both do their home duties and attend the programme. As a result, the caregivers feel more involved, and more girls in Kilifi are able to attend the programme.

In addition, participants at Moving the Goalposts selected 48 fathers who respect girls' rights and support them in their empowerment process through football. The supportive fathers were invited for a Father's Day celebration at MTG's headquarters, where they interacted with the field leaders in discussions, film screenings, and a football match. Topics that were highlighted were girls' rights, responsibilities of girls and fathers, and how to involve fathers more in the upbringing of their daughters and participation in MTG.

One supportive father is Mwanasha's: "My daughter has a baby, and she is not married, but In MTG she can give herself a chance. I am willing to stay at home with my grandson and give my daughter all the support she needs".



Case Study: Tiempo de Juego

[Tiempo de Juego](#), a grassroots organisation using sport with adolescent girls, created a social business project that gives participants and their mothers an opportunity to get training and work in a bakery. This provides families with incentives for letting their girls participate in sport activities. The organisation also involves mothers in sport activities: some of the mothers train every week, have their own Tiempo de Juego uniforms, and coach themselves as a 'mums' team. Most of the women have little/no experience with football, however, the opportunity to relax, see the conditions their girls are playing in, and enjoy camaraderie with other women in a safe space outside the home is a powerful strategy for gaining support.





Case Study: One Family People

[One Family People](#) gives a manual on reproductive health to all of the mothers of girls who participate in their programme so that they have the resources and confidence to help inform their daughters about the issues that are being addressed at sport sessions.



Case Study: Asian Football Development Programme

The [Asian Football Development Programme](#), which works with Syrian refugees in camps in Jordan, asks local families in the camp what they need so their basic needs are met before asking if their daughters can play in the football programme. The organisation also builds covered, indoor fields, which is a must for most families and their daughters.




Peer Girls


When considering building solid partnerships, first consider your relationship with the girls who will be your participants as well as with the rest of the girls in the community. **Gaining buy-in from girls can be the most difficult part of building a programme**, as many girls have never considered sport as something available to them or something that they necessarily wanted to do because of social pressure to be 'feminine' and do things that are 'appropriate' for girls.

Additionally, remember that girls influence each other. If sport participation is new, girls can be a negative influence on each other and stand in the way of other girls participating. This can take the form of teasing those who wear sports clothes and making them feel bullied. It is essential that girls are informed about your sport programme and that you make an effort to dispel misconceptions about playing sport. It is also important that if your programme has limits to the number of participants you can have, that you take steps to avoid potential conflict with girls who do not participate and who may be jealous of the resources that their peers are receiving.

Common Obstacles to Engaging Peers



Lack of access to/contact with peers of the girls in your programme.



Jealousy of girls who participate in the programme and get equipment and other resources.

Incentives or Motivations for Engagement



If girls have a stronger network of peers outside of their sport group that encourages them to play and be a leader on and off the field.



Engaging peers of the girls in your programme could turn those peers into potential new participants in the future.



Girls in the programme have an easier time passing along information learned from the sport and life skill trainings to their peers and, therefore, more girls are reached indirectly in the community.



The community does not only see sport as an activity for a select group of girls but rather, something that all girls in the community can do and have the right to do.

Strategies for Engagement

- Hold community events that are open to all girls in the community, regardless of whether they are part of the programme or not. During these events, do demonstrations of general sports and play-based activities. These events are great opportunities to celebrate different international holidays, like International Day of the Girl Child.
- Encourage participants in the programme to reach out to a certain number of their friends at school who are not part of the programme each month or every couple of months. This could be in the form of informal discussion about things they learned during training or life skill courses, or more formal peer education lessons supported by the organisation.

- Hold a 'bring a friend to training' day, when each participant in the programme can bring a friend to one training session so they can see and understand what their friend is experiencing.



Case Study: Maitrayana

[Maitrayana](#) is a non-profit based in Delhi, India that works towards their dream of a “gender-equal society in which girls and women can exercise their rights.” Their programme, the Young People’s Initiative, uses sport, particularly netball, to deliver life skills on Communication, Peer Pressure, Body Image, Menstruation, Financial Literacy, and Gender-Based Violence to adolescent girls and young women at community sites in Delhi and Mumbai. Girls not only attend sessions for sport and life skills, but also have the opportunity to become coaches for the organisation. Taking on these leadership roles, the young women coaches of Maitrayana are able to reach many more girls in their communities and teach them sport and important life skills, breaking down prejudices and misinformation.



Case Study: Youth Empowerment Foundation

In addition to their classroom and football training sessions, [Youth Empowerment Foundation](#) uses a peer-to-peer model where girls who participate in their programme go out and educate other girls about what they learn from YEF coaches and educators. This model has allowed them to exponentially increase their influence, and it creates community support from other girls who become interested in the programme through peer-to-peer interactions.





Case Study: SALT Academy

The [SALT Academy](#) uses football festivals to attract and expose adolescent girls across rural communities to football. Mighty Girls, SALT football players, run the festivals and give inspirational talks about what football and sport have done for their own lives. One example is from the Buor District, a small community near the Thai border, which used to be littered with landmines. 90 girls participated in a football tournament and then, together with numerous boys who had been spectating, took part in life skill sessions on gender equality and children's rights. At the end three Mighty Girls from the community shared how football has positively impacted their lives and the obstacles they faced as younger female football players.

Boys and Men

Engaging boys and men is a necessary part of the process to improve the status of girls and women. The vulnerabilities and disadvantages that adolescent girls face are often due to social constructions that determine identities, roles, behaviours, and social structures. By addressing these social stereotypes, with girls as well as boys, sport programmes can take a holistic approach to creating social structures that empower girls and do not alienate or exclude the boys. Boys and men can play a positive role in ensuring that girls have access to sport programmes and leadership positions and are able to make their own decisions about their bodies and future.

Seeking the support and help of older males, such as fathers, brothers, relatives, or other community members when implementing your sport programme can help your organisation reach its objectives through a holistic and sustainable approach. By engaging the wider male community, you gain valuable advocates and important allies who can work with you to change the existing social stereotypes, gender roles, and societal constructions that contribute to women's disempowerment and vulnerability to gender-based violence.

The goal is to create an atmosphere that fosters working with, not against, men to foster more equitable relationships between males and females.



Consider

Restrictive gender stereotypes can also hurt boys and men themselves, setting them up for failure in difficult economic or conflict situations if they do not live up to traditional gender norms or societal views of what a man must be or provide.

Common Obstacles to Engaging Boys and Men

Boys' and men's sport teams refusing to give use of facilities to girls' teams.

Teasing by boys who see girl participants as unfeminine.

Limited sport opportunities in general, so when a sport programme is established in a community that didn't have one, and participation is limited to girls, boys may feel marginalised and resist.

Boys becoming jealous and aggressive toward girls who are part of a sport programme they are not part of.

Brothers wanting to participate alongside sisters in sport programmes, and feeling they have a right to do so.

Concerns for safety of girls from harassment and abuse by boys and men.

Men from the community coming to sessions to intimidate girls.



Incentives or Motivations for Engagement



Access to income opportunities officiating, coaching or working within the sport programme.



Recognition in the community as supporting girls.



Potential pathway to leadership in the community.

Strategies for Engagement

- Engage boys in the programme by planning tournaments where both girls and boys play (for more information, go to the [Mixing Genders](#) section of this guide).
- Create a system in which boys can be allies of the programme and help sisters and girls with chores at home.
- Partner with other sport and development programmes that work with boys and offer to do tournaments or exchanges with them.
- Encourage female leaders and coaches to organise and coach groups of boys. This will create a space where boys can play too and one that challenges traditional gender roles.
- Encourage fathers or male caregivers to come to programme meetings. Often-times, mothers or female caregivers take on the responsibility of attending all meetings with teachers and sport coaches.
- Create a committee of male caregivers whose daughters are involved in the programme.
- Have male supporters strategise ways they could reach out to other males and institutions in the community to help promote their daughters' right to play as well as their rights in general. Examples could include meeting with influential groups in the community normally not accessible to women or gathering large crowds of supporters when there are matches or tournaments.
- Involve males in organising tournaments or community events.
- Engage the boys in girls' lives when making the case for girls' sport programmes.

- Hold meetings or attend boys' tournaments and describe why girls' sport is good for the community and how it could be good for them as well.
- Partner with groups that engage both girls and boys and men. For example, dance troupes are often mixed and are acceptable in most communities; this can be used as a demonstration of positive engagement.



Case Study: Naz Foundation

In the [Naz Foundation's](#) Goal programme, girl Goal Champions lead select life skills sessions as well as teaching netball skills to boys who would hang around during the girls' practices. The director of the programme realised that the boys wanted to know how to play netball because it was something new to them, netball being traditionally a girls' game. She used girls in her programmes who were leaders to teach those boys how to play netball and lead them through selected life skills sessions as well.



Case Study: Football for All Vietnam

[Football for All Vietnam](#) (FFAV), a grassroots football for development organisations based in Hue City, actively seeks out and relies on volunteers from the community to act as referees, coaches, and club managers for their football activities, which are always 50% girls and 50% boys. This allows the organisation to engage boys and men, and get them on board with girls' football, in communities throughout Vietnam. These volunteers go back into the community and act as advocates for the girls. For a personal story of one dedicated volunteer, Mr Nguyen Van Xuan, check out the web article: [FFAV's Companion](#).





Case Study: Boxgirls

At [Boxgirls](#), boys are invited to train with the girls from time to time. Priest, the leader of the programme, often has a more experienced female boxer instruct a less experienced, younger male boxer. This encourages the boy's respect for the girl's mental and physical skill, while building the girl's confidence in themselves and their abilities.



Case Study: MIFUMI

[MIFUMI](#) uses karate and taekwondo to educate girls about domestic violence and empower them physically and emotionally against it. When the programme began, Project Coordinator Janet Otte reported that boys were physically attacking girls on their way home from training. The boys didn't have any understanding of martial arts and wanted to show the girls that they, too, could fight. Janet therefore made the decision to include boys occasionally to educate them about the non-violent principles of martial.



Case Study: ICRW

The [ICRW](#) conducted a programme in Mumbai, India, called Parivartan, which engaged cricket coaches and mentors in schools and the community to teach boys lessons about controlling aggression, preventing violence, and promoting respect. The programme used peer-to-peer education, engaging young cricket captains to act as role models and educate their teammates on GBV and positive behaviours.




School Teachers and Headteachers


Some of our partner organisations engage directly with schools, whereas others work outside of schools but might rely on them for support and resources. In either case, teachers and school principals are very important allies for most organisations. Girls who have access to formal education spend much of their time at school, so teachers have a huge influence in their lives. Headteachers and teachers often have access to resources such as fields to play on, sport materials, and transportation that could be useful for your programme and to which you may not have access. Whether your programme works directly in schools or not, creating partnerships with school headteachers and teachers is a good way to build support for your programme and gain access to resources. Additionally, teachers often have a much-respected position in the community, and if your programme has their support and approval, it may influence other community stakeholders' opinions.




Common Barriers



Often teachers are overworked and are unwilling to take on further responsibility to practically support the development or running of sport programmes.



Misperceptions about girls and sport, and gender roles.



Fear of criticism from other community members.

Incentives or Motivations for Engagement



Access to new skills and methods of teaching.



Gaining opportunities to learn and play sport themselves.



Gaining additional support or resources from the organisation.



Opportunity to build increased trust with girl students.



Respect from community members.



Prestige of hosting programme at their school.

Strategies for Engagement

- Try to schedule practices, games, and sessions at times that do not conflict with girls' school duties.
- Share your curriculum with teachers, so they are clear what girls are learning at your programme.
- Select a teacher in every relevant school in the community as a point person for your programme. This teacher can serve as a resource for the girls and an ally to your programme and can inform other teachers about the programme.
- Consider training teachers as coaches. If you do not have enough coaches, it is wise to train teachers as coaches so then they can also deliver sport to girls.
- Keep school personnel informed about girls' progress in both sport and life skills.
- Invite them to participate in events.
- Host community meetings at schools and ask teachers and headteachers to be part of the programme.



Image source: Fondo Centroamericano De Mujeres (FCAM), Latin America



Case Study: Sadili Oval

[Sadili Oval](#) delivers sport to girls in schools around Kibera in Nairobi through their Girl Power Clubs. At every school they ask the girls to select a 'patron' for the programme: a teacher who is then the point person for the Girl Power Club at the school. These patrons help build a relationship between Sadili Oval coaches and the school and serve as an important resource for the girls.



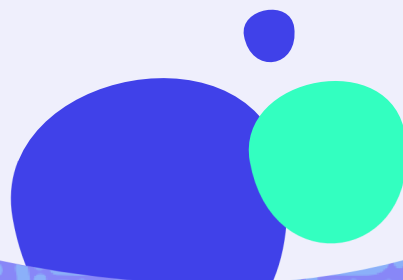
Case Study: Kembatta Mentti Gezzima

At [Kembatta Mentti Gezzima](#) teachers are essential to the programme because parents trust their daughters' teachers, and therefore if the teachers support the girls playing sport, then the parents will. PE teachers are recruited as coaches and referees and are very involved in the programme delivery.



Case Study: Right to Play

At [Right to Play](#) they are training teachers to facilitate sport curricula with young girls. The teachers have found that their students are more engaged and energetic during class time as a result of the sport sessions, and they are encouraging fellow teachers to attend Right to Play trainings.





Case Study: Football for All Vietnam

[Football for All Vietnam](#) (FFAV) trains local female teachers as coaches and referees for the local leagues. One example is a 27-year-old teacher named Ms. Phan Thi Tuyen at a primary school in Huong Tra district in Hue Province. Before joining, she was shy and not confident as a teacher, but once she became involved with FFAV, she became confident, independent, and active. She was chosen to lead and supervise the FFAV team participating in the Norway Cup in 2010, in Oslo, Norway. She was then recruited as a club developer and eventually became a facilitator for training other community-based football coaches.

Community Leaders


Power and influence in a community setting is often organised hierarchically, with political, educational, religious, or economic leaders at the top. The opinions of those at the top of the hierarchy shape a community's support for your programme. Creating positive partnerships with the leaders at the top develops important inroads across a community. The failure to do so can mean political, economic, and logistical hurdles for you down the line.

Engaging different community leaders may require a variety of approaches, depending on who they are and what their opinions are on girls in their community. For example, you would have to take a very different approach with a conservative male religious leader than with a woman community leader who is the head of the local women's committee. In order to navigate this, it is important to understand these stakeholders and to engage them when planning and implementing your programme. Creating alliances and working relationships with these leaders may ensure the sustainability of your programme.



² F. A. Kuponiyi. (2008). *Anthropologist*, 10(4), page 239-243.


Common Barriers




Community leaders who feel that their authority is threatened if they are not consulted before the start of a new programme.



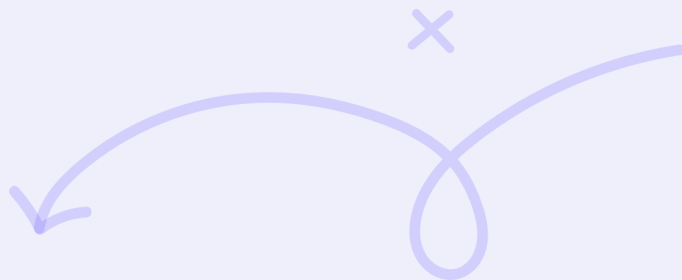
Traditional or conservative views on girls' position and behaviour (such as disapproval of girls wearing sport clothing).



Desire to uphold traditional cultural practices that can be harmful to girls (for example, female genital mutilation or cutting).



Demands of bribes or favours in exchange for support.



Incentives or Motivations for Engagement



Being part of the planning of the programme means more knowledge and control over how it is implemented.



Recognition for doing something positive for girls in the community.



Increasing influence by working with your organisation.



Diversifying leadership roles.



Invitations to be a speaker or have a role with the programme.



The programme may complement an initiative for girls that they already support.

Strategies for Engagement

- Organise community meetings and ask the community leaders to lead them to talk about your programme and the benefits.
- Meet individually with community leaders to discuss the programme before you have events or new activities. Maintain constant communication and transparency and have an open ear for advice and concerns. Be patient and understand that trust is built over time
- Offer community leaders advisory positions with your organisation. Be transparent about where your funds come from and how you spend them on the programme.
- Adhere to cultural and religious customs when appropriate.
- Solicit the help and expertise of community leaders and ask for suggestions when a problem arises. Consider asking them for referrals or for help linking you to people who they feel may help improve your programme. Once you contact the referral, remember to write or call back immediately and thank them.
- Host events in religious centres and ask permission from religious leaders, especially when searching for a venue.
- Don't demand more time and energy than community leaders are able and willing to give.
- Respect the cultural landscape and try to work within it, as long as expectations of girls do not conflict with their human rights.
- Remain nonpartisan. Aligning with a political party makes your programme susceptible to the rise and fall of that party. The well-being and development of girls is not a political issue, and constantly reiterate that your sport programme has no political agenda.
- Express gratitude. Follow up with letters, conversations and tokens of appreciation, like t-shirts, photos from events, etc.
- Recognise supportive community leaders with an award. Be clear to the rest of the community about what you are rewarding and why.





Case Study: Coaching for Hope

A [Coaching For Hope](#) programme working in conservative Muslim villages in Northern Burkina Faso has staff visit religious leaders with young women from neighbouring villages who themselves participate in sport. These young women explain that they wear the hijab when they play and that they have remained good Muslims while playing sport.



Case Study: BRAC


[BRAC Uganda](#) hosts Community Leaders Workshops in the different communities where they implement the Livelihood for Adolescence Program (ELA Program). The ELA program is designed specifically to improve the quality of the life of vulnerable adolescents by organising them, creating spaces of their own and helping them develop a set of skills so that they can live and grow as confident, empowered and self-reliant individuals contributing to change in their own families and communities. The Community Leaders Workshops are events where prominent female figures from the community visit an ELA club to talk to the girls about sexual health, life challenges or a host of other topics. The girls can ask questions and make valuable connections to important and prominent women and create a network of mentors and advisors.

Government


Operating within the legal mandates of a region, including that region's city, provincial, and national laws, is a simple and non-negotiable necessity for establishing your programme. Failure to do so, especially in corrupt government environments, can jeopardise your success and the safety of your participants. Positioning your organisation as a leader in girls and sport can show government leaders and ministries that you are an asset that could help them develop their policies or reach more children.




Common Obstacles When Engaging the Government




Government officials who refuse permission to use public sport spaces.




Government officials who do not uphold the law and refuse to report instances of violence against girls.



Officials who expect bribes from organisations who want to work in their community.



Gender bias in government decision-making and actions.



Long bureaucratic procedures that affect timelines of project set up or implementation.



Incentives or Motivations for Engagement



Recognition for supporting positive social project for girls.



Being asked to be a guest speaker.



If the programme has a positive community impact, then by being associated, the official is building community support.



Strategies for Engagement

- Meet with all local government officials before the start of the programme, informing them about the programme, and ask for their help/advice.
- Find spaces to play that are not controlled by the government.
- Formally invite (in writing) government officials to all events and invite them to speak.
- Understand laws and abide by them. When required, register your organisation.
- Write letters to government officials to inform them of your programme details, intentions, and membership.
- Follow protocol regarding soliciting support. Sometimes this means approaching lower-ranking government officials first, who then will make introductions to higher-ranking officials.
- Invite police to monitor major events and thank them publicly for their support.
- Find out the ministry or department in charge of promoting sport and games and be sure to discuss your programme and how you can work together with this ministry.
- If police or government officials begin to expect financial compensation for their support, be strategic about engaging them less frequently or in front of other community partners who would frown upon such demands.
- Consider applying for government funding when available.
- Be aware of the policies and government position on issues and use this as leverage to claim support from the government.
- Gain allies by interacting with government officials informally as well to get insights of procedures and how to navigate political dynamics.





Case Study: Gregoria Apaza

[Gregoria Apaza](#), an organisation that addresses gender-based violence amongst indigenous girls and women of El Alto, holds rallies promoting different women's rights laws or legislation in La Paz. Two hundred people turned up at one rally, including members of the police and military. They marched in defence of women's rights alongside other men and women.



Case Study: Kembatta Mentti Gezzima

[Kembatta Mentti Gezzima](#) approached and engaged the Women and Youth Affairs officer in their community and included the officer in official community conversations and events planning. This has led to support from the government office, and the Women and Youth Affairs officer helps to facilitate the programme by providing resources and logistical support, as well as building approval in local government.





Case Study: NOWSPAR

[NOWSPAR](#) (National Organisation for Women, Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation) partners with the national governing bodies of sport in Zambia to promote girls' and women's participation in sport throughout the country. Through this partnership they have access to professional athletes who can help them build support, as well as government officials whose support is essential to the sustainability of their programme. In addition, the Ministry of Education has offered NOWSPAR free office space in its building in Lusaka.



Case Study: Youth Empowerment Foundation

A staff member of [Youth Empowerment Foundation](#) attended one of Women Win's Digital Storytelling trainings, where she produced a short video about sport and girls. She will use this to gain essential support from local government officials who need to give their approval in order for the programme to continue. She plans to invite officials to a meeting where she will show the stories and the officials will hear what a positive impact the programme has had from the girls themselves.


Media

The media can be a great ally in engaging the community and gaining support for your programme. Besides traditional media, such as television, radio, and print; new types of media, such as social media and other internet platforms, are providing organisations and girls themselves fast and easy ways to interact with the community and its multiple stakeholders.




Image source: Jeremy Bezanger, Unsplash


Common Barriers



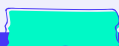
Media outlets often give attention to men's and boys' sport and not women's or girls' sport.



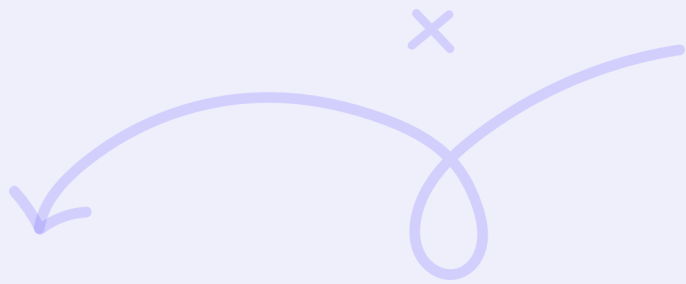
The media may not understand the goals and the importance of your programme.



Media outlets may lack access to resources for sending reporters or media representatives to visit the programme.



Some media personnel will expect to be paid for covering your programme.



Incentives or Motivations for Engagement



Opportunity to be seen as promoting important initiative for girls.



Girls' sport may be a new topic and one that has never been covered.



Build visibility of their radio station or television station if they attend an event and are seen there by the community.



Gaining original stories about local leadership that may not be accessible to them in other places.



Strategies for Engagement

- Invite media to all events that you host.
- Ask media contacts to feature stories about your participants, and ask participants if they want to learn more about the media.
- Inform the media early and thoroughly about your programme. Include radio stations, newspapers, local television, etc.
- Feature media publications about your programme on your website, or at your office.
- Follow up and thank media contacts whenever they publish something about your programme.
- Ask media organisations to support your project by donating shirts or equipment and offer to put up a poster or banner advertising them.
- Prepare as much content and material as you can, as some media personnel may not have an interest in your programme; the easier you make it for them to do an article, the higher your chances of publication.
- Invite media as participants in your meetings and planning of events in order to contribute to their understanding of girls' sport programmes in general, not just events.
- Ask media personnel to give talks and presentations at events and in the programme activities.

Social Media

Social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok and Twitter, are free tools that you can use to keep in touch with your stakeholders and community members directly. Social media gives you the opportunity to share whatever you want and when you want, rather than waiting for traditional media to pick up a story or attend an event. It gives you complete control over how an event or information is portrayed and what to share. Girls themselves are usually knowledgeable about social media and the internet and can be great assets in helping you engage the community. Girls who are in positions of leadership within your programme can tell their stories about the positive influence of sport on their lives (for example through Digital Storytelling), which can then be distributed through the internet and will demonstrate to the community the benefits for girls who play sport.



Common Barriers

You may not have anyone who knows how to effectively use social media.

The internet connection may be unreliable, making it hard to post or upload social media content, and for the community to access this content.

There may not be enough time and enough staff to update social media content.

Incentives or Motivations for Engagement



Social media is a free tool that is easy to use.



Organisations have complete control over content, how they portray themselves and their programmes, and when content is shared.



Content can have wide reach and influence if the community has access to internet.



Potential to engage international partners that would have otherwise not known about your programme or organisation.

Strategies for Engagement

- Enlist the help of the girls themselves, as they are often proficient in using social media and already have networks to which they are connected.
- Share digital stories or any other stories of empowerment online.
- Use social media sites (Facebook, Twitter) and blogs to engage with local and international partners and stakeholders.
- Stay active on social media; large lulls in activity might cause you to lose supporters online.
- Try creating a posting schedule and delegate posting duties to one or two people.



Case Study: Gregoria Apaza

[Gregoria Apaza](#) is an organisation that addresses gender-based violence amongst indigenous girls and women. In addition to running life skills, employability, and sport programmes for girls and women, GA runs their own radio station. Named 'Pachamama Radio', the station features continuous coverage of issues critical to addressing gender in Bolivia. Several of the programmes are directed and emceed by youth and give girls the opportunity to share their voices with the community.



Case Study: Sadili Oval

[Sadili Oval](#) has built a relationship with a local and a national sport radio station. Once a year Sadili Oval hosts a football tournament to raise awareness about safe space and HIV/AIDS and the radio station covers the tournament and interviews some of the girls from Sadili, which raises the status of the programme and raises awareness throughout Kenya.



Case Study: HODI

[Horn of Africa Development Initiative](#) (HODI) uses social media, specifically Facebook, to re-engage graduates of their programme as well as peers of the girls who participate in their programme. They encourage graduates to remain involved in some capacity, even if they no longer attend sessions. They also use Facebook as a tool to engage and report to donors.





Case Study: Empodera

[Empodera](#), a non-profit organisation in Brazil, uses all types of sport to empower girls and work toward making a more gender equitable society. They use several social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube) to highlight their work and develop an online community following. They also provide young leaders and participants in their programmes opportunities to express themselves through Empodera's social media channels. This directly links the online community to girls and their stories and voices.

Resource Providers, Partners, and Donors

The support of resource providers, partners, and donors is often necessary for the success of a girls' sport programme. Understanding how to engage with donors, funders, and resource providers, and create long-term, mutually-beneficial partnerships with them, is an important part of sustaining your programme and engaging with community groups.


Engagement styles and strategies with resource providers, partners, and donors will differ depending on the relationship they have to you, your organisation, or your community. When entering into partnerships with donors, funders, or other community resource providers and organisations, remember four important principles that will ensure the partnership is a success: Transparency, Equity, Accountability, and Mutual Benefit.

Donors and Funders


Although all the principles of successful partnerships apply to funders and donors, these relationships often require special attention and additional resources. Donors and funders could be local businesses, international NGOs, government bodies, or individual people in the community. Understanding how to engage with these funders and donors is essential in keeping them engaged with your programme and sometimes determines whether or not they offer funding or financially support the programme in some way.

Although all donors and funders are not the same, most do not like to be treated as cash machines, only being engaged when your organisation needs money. Most donors and funders, big and small, are very interested in updates about the programme, including its impact on the girls and the community, and require these updates through reporting. Most donors also value honesty and would prefer to be problem-solving partners with an organisation as opposed to getting updates that disregard all the problems and obstacles and highlight only successes.


Common Barriers




Not enough staff or time to fundraise or seek out new opportunities.



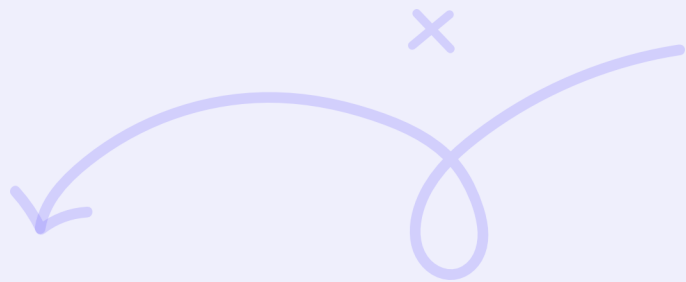
Not enough staff or time to report thoroughly and effectively to donors and funders.



Lack of access to funders and donors, both local and international.



High competition for the attention of particular funders and donors.



Incentives or Motivations for Engagement



Supporting an innovative approach to empowering girls and women.



Exposure to new learnings from working with a different target group.



Increasing their presence in a particular country or region.



Diversity through funding a portfolio of various groups.



Strategies for Engagement

- Create a flier that concisely and attractively summarises your programme. In many places, a written document with photos goes a long way in making your programme look more official and respectable. This is especially important if it is a new programme. Include the names of your partners on your materials, if appropriate.
- Report on outcomes and impact. Show results in multiple forms, including statistics, written accounts, and photos.
- Treat every relationship as a partnership. Share discussions around successes and problem solving.
- Introduce funders to other individuals and organisations invested in the same causes or working in the same area.
- Share future goals and expectations.
- Invite funders and donors to events and ask them to speak if relevant.



Case Study: Kick4Life

[Kick4Life](#), a football for development programme that works with both boys and girls, partnered with telecommunications company Vodacom. Vodacom has donated more than 100 mobile phones to Kick4life football club as an initiative to enhance communication between the HIV/AIDS counsellors and their clients.

Resource Providers and Organisational Partners


Finding resources to run your programme does not always have to mean spending money. Mutually beneficial partnerships can be a valuable way to secure equipment, facilities, expert advice, basic provisions, and other programme needs. These resource providers can include local businesses, schools, other organisations, government facilities, and more. In your strategy you should consider who has resources that you could benefit from and how you could begin to build a relationship with them that is mutually beneficial. It is important to remember that the partnership should be a win for both sides and not one side taking and the other only giving.

For example, if there is a local business that sells sport equipment, you can offer to advertise their business at events in exchange for a discount on equipment. Additionally, consider partnering with a local school to use their playing field for free so that you do not have to pay for a space. Understand that although partnerships are occasionally built on altruism, they are more frequently built and sustained when there is clear mutual benefit. Consider things like helping maintain the field at a local school by cleaning up litter after every training session or donating extra equipment you have to the youth centre that allows you to use their space.


Common Barriers



Competition between organisations.



Reluctance to partner based on lack or misunderstanding of programme.



Limited connection or networking opportunities with other organisations serving adolescent girls in the community (NGOs, government groups, businesses).

Incentives or Motivations for Engagement



Advertising for their business or organisation.



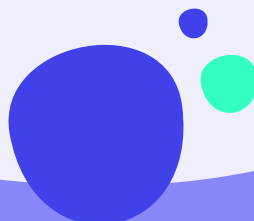
A mutually beneficial partnership in which you provide them with a service and they provide you with resources.



Increased respect in the community.



Larger reach and more beneficiaries.



Strategies for Engagement

- Communicate frequently and transparently about goals, needs, and challenges.
- Demonstrate the successes of your programme: people want to partner with a successful programme that is positively impacting girls and the community.
- Be communicative. Conduct regular meetings and follow up with reporting on progress, events, and impact.
- Assure them of visibility or invisibility, depending on the desire of the partner. Express gratitude, publicly thanking each partner for support, using logos and other materials provided by the partner.
- Be proactive, reaching out to organisations rather than waiting for them to contact you.
- Organise a day of dialogue, bringing together various organisations serving the same demographic in the community for discussions on ways to better work together.
- Offer to advertise for a local business partner at events.
- Connect with champions or advocates for your programme who are part of the resource provider's community; e.g., a caregiver who is in the Council whose land you use.
- Support other organisations and their activities through volunteer provision or promotion of information.



Case Study: Association of Kigali Women in Sports

[Association of Kigali Women in Sports](#) has a very small budget, and prices to rent office space are very high. They have created a partnership with the Rwanda IOC and the Rwanda National Sport Association so that they have office space for free at the national football stadium in Kigali.



Case Study: Girls and Football South Africa

[Girls and Football South Africa](#), an NGO based in Cape Town that works with adolescent girls using football and media, created a relationship with Banyana Banyana, the South African national female football team. Players from the team come to camps organised by the organisation and serve as role models, inviting the girls in the programme to national team games.

04 Strategies for Engaging the Community

It is important to plan your community engagement strategy in advance. The planning process starts with an understanding of what you and your organisation define as your community and who makes up that community (meaning stakeholders, groups, etc.). Once you understand who your community is, and who the key stakeholders and community groups are, you can begin planning how to best engage each of those groups.

Step 1: Defining Goals and Objectives

The first important question to ask yourself in planning your community engagement activities is the same question that you ask yourself when you design the programme: what do you hope to achieve? By identifying what you hope to achieve with the programme, you can begin to identify who will be important to your programme's success and how. Break down that list of stakeholders into who your biggest potential allies are and who may prove to be a barrier to your programme's success. Make a list of your programme objectives and a list of stakeholders and their potential influences on your objectives. All of these will relate to your overall programme goal. Without clear goals for your girls' sport programme or a clear understanding of what you are trying to achieve, determining how to approach your stakeholders might be more difficult.

For more information on strategic planning and creating clear goals, look through the [Common Ground Initiative](#) resource.

Step 2: Understanding the Community

The next step should be to understand who makes up your community. This can be done by simply making a list of all community members. Another way to do this is through community mapping. Community mapping is an activity that usually involves members of a community who visually represent (through drawings) what their community looks like. The focus of the community mapping exercise (identifying safe spaces, community resources, or types of community groups) determines what the maps look like when they are complete. This can be done in

a workshop setting or organization meeting, and can serve to provide you with a better understanding of the groups and stakeholders in your community.

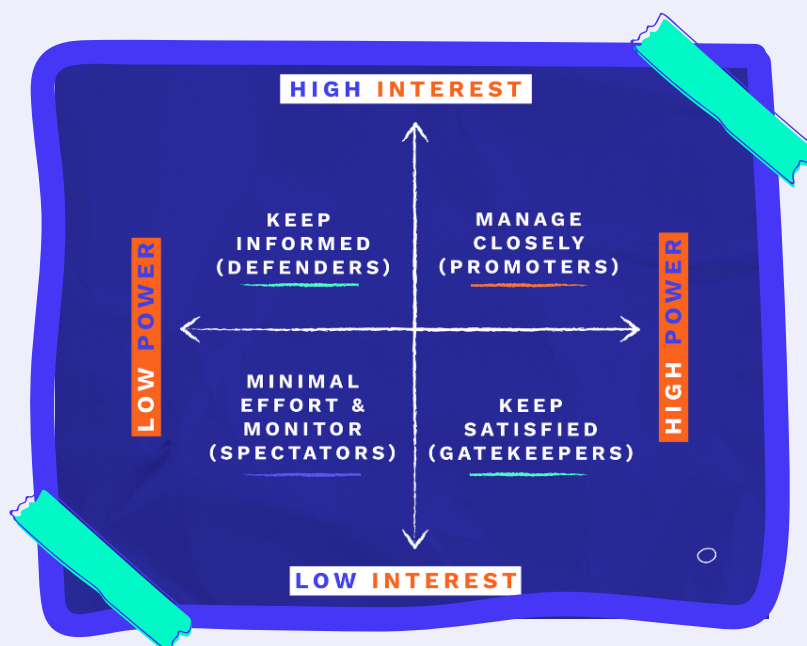
Step 3: Identifying Stakeholders and Community Groups

In the section of this guide entitled Community Groups and Stakeholders you will find a list of possible community groups and stakeholders in your communities and the barriers that you may face in engaging them, as well as best practices to engage them.

The next step in your planning process is to make a similar list, narrowing down your list from Step 2. This may take some time, as the best way to do it is to speak to the people in the community and the girls who will participate in your programme to understand who the influencers and stakeholders are. As you make the list, note what potential barriers you might encounter and use the strategies presented in this guide to try and overcome those barriers.

Look at the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy chart below. Identify each stakeholder that you have mapped as one of the following categories:

- a** Promoters: Stakeholders that have a high interest in your programme and hold power in the community. You need to manage these relationships closely as they will promote your programme's needs to other stakeholders.
- b** Defenders: Stakeholders who have a high interest in your programme but do not hold a lot of power. They will defend the rights of your programme so although you may not need to manage them closely for impact, you should keep them informed to keep up their interest.
- c** Spectators: Stakeholders who have low interest in your programme and do not hold a lot of power. You should still try to engage them but not spend too much energy or resources, to focus on higher impact strategies.
- d** Gatekeepers: Stakeholders who have high power but low interest in your programme. You need to find a way to keep them happy and satisfied in order to keep your programme running. They do not need to be 'Promoters' but they do need to be satisfied enough.



Step 4: Engaging Key Stakeholders

Once you have a list of the key stakeholders in your community, you can begin to design and implement approaches and engagement activities. Even if your programme is already in progress, you can always go back and engage more stakeholders. It is important that you are open to changing your programme based on your relationship to, engagement with, and input from stakeholders. If part of your strategy is to involve them in planning and implementation, then it is important that you respect their input and make changes where necessary, otherwise they will see that you have only involved them as a token gesture and it is not true involvement.

Sample Strategy and Plan

Define Your Audience: Not all stakeholders can be approached the same way. Each group requires a different approach in order to get their support. Make sure that you clearly understand the different groups and their needs and desires.

Brainstorm Actions: For each group, brainstorm ideas for how to approach or engage them, before, during, and after the programme.

Create a Timeline: Plot your actions for each group on a timeline and prioritise the groups that are most important for the programme first. Remember that even if a current programme or intervention is not taking place at a particular time, that doesn't mean you can't engage community groups or stakeholders. Focus on continuous year-round engagement to maximise support.

Delegate Roles: Assign roles and tasks within the organisation regarding actions. If each group of stakeholders feels like they have a point person or contact person within the organisation, they will be more likely to stay engaged.

Step 5: Measuring Impact

The final step is to measure the impact of your efforts in the community. You may not be able to measure all of the impacts that you have, but with specific tools, such as a parent questionnaire, you will be able to capture what the change has been with certain community stakeholders. For more information and promising practices, go to the [Measuring Impact](#) section.





Game

over!