



RIGHT TO PLAY
PROTECT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.



Impact of the RECAF-Jeu program in Senegal

Project Description

Renforcement des Capacités des Filles par le Sport et le Jeu (RECAF-Jeu) is a five-year program that has been running in Senegal since 2021. The project aims to empower girls and young women who are most vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV) and gender inequality through sports and play. The program enables girls and young women to claim their rights and challenge harmful gender norms.

We understand that gender inequality cannot be addressed in a vacuum; that's why RECAF-Jeu also supports young boys in the community to develop ideas of positive masculinity and to be advocates for girls and women. The program also engages parents, caregivers, community leaders, and mentors to better understand and change social norms that negatively impact both girls and boys.

Context

RECAF-Jeu is a five-year project, funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented in two regions of Senegal, Sédhiou and Ziguinchor, that harbour traditional views about the role of women in the home and in society.

These two regions account for more than 56% of teenage pregnancies in the country. According to a 2019 Demographic Health Survey, rates of child, early and forced marriage were 46.7% in Sédhiou. Early and forced marriage and pregnancy, as well as the demands of household chores are key factors that contribute to high school drop-out rates for girls, as well as gender-based violence and inequality.

KEY RESULTS

- 1 **Girls developed agency over their life choices**
39% of girls demonstrated more agency in decision-making when it came to sports, education, and marriage.
- 2 **Reduced gender-based violence**
68% of girls and young women perceive a decrease in Gender-Based Violence over the past 12 months, compared to 50% at beginning of the project.
- 3 **More boys are advocating for girls equality**
44.5% more boys in the program are confidently speaking out against gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, and early marriage thanks to efforts to promote positive masculinity and community support.
- 5 **Increased family and community engagement**
21% of community members took action to support gender equality in the last year. Parents' support for their daughters' involvement in sports also improved.

KEY LEARNINGS

- 1 **Training future leaders**
Youth are emerging as peer mentors. With training in leadership, advocacy, and public speaking, youth are now equipped to mentor their peers, helping to sustain and expand the project's impact.
- 2 **Strong community partnerships drive impact**
Ensuring the right partnerships is key to project success. Involving youth in evaluating and selecting partners fosters leadership and helps build a more engaged and supportive community. Establishing a project advisory group can further strengthen collaboration and effectiveness.
- 4 **Environmental barriers and challenges**
Youth identified litter, plastic waste, and livestock droppings as challenges on their sports fields, impacting playability and inclusion, especially for those with physical disabilities. Addressing these concerns presents an opportunity to integrate environmental stewardship into programming, empowering youth to care for their shared spaces.



Aminata's Story

Aminata, 14, lives in Ziguinchor. Like many young girls, she experiences the harsh realities of gender discrimination and inequitable social norms. She also faces another challenge, her asthma, which has often caused her to have to miss school, leaving her feeling isolated and lonely.

That changed when she joined a Right To Play-supported basketball club. Encouraged by her father, the club's coach, Aminata stepped onto the court. What started as a reluctant attempt quickly became a passion, giving her a sense of belonging and strength.

In Senegal, gender discrimination often limits girls' participation in sports, but the RECAF JEU program, supported by Right To Play, is breaking barriers. Through basketball, Aminata gained confidence, leadership skills, and a voice, she's now become Vice President of the Ziguinchor Children's Communal Council. Her father, Coach Nalla, saw firsthand how Right To Play's training helped young athletes become more vocal about their rights and more engaged in their communities.

Today, Aminata is not just an athlete—she's a leader. She describes playing basketball as feeling like she's "in a cloud," a place of empowerment and joy. Her improved health and confidence have boosted her academic performance and social life. By challenging gender norms and speaking up for her peers, Aminata is proving that sports are more than just a game—they are a path to change.

RECAF-Jeu is breaking barriers by empowering girls through sport, shifting community attitudes toward gender equality, and building a foundation for lasting, change in Senegal.



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