

Leadership And Economic Empowerment Pathways: An Innovative S4D Framework

Smith, Meg; Matuska, Nicole

Women Win, The Netherlands

E-mail: m.smith@womenwin.org

Aim of the research/project

The Leadership and Economic Empowerment Pathways (LEEP) strategy is an innovative sports-based framework that moves adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) through structured steps toward targeted educational, entrepreneurial or career oriented goals. The main goal of the strategy is to develop girls' leadership and build the transferable skills and competencies necessary for them to become independent and economically empowered women. The secondary goal of the LEEP strategy is to strengthen organisations that deliver girls' sports (for development) programmes by providing them with a sustainable supply of effective peer leaders and coaches, lowering cost per participant and increasing scale.

Theoretical background or literature review

AGYW make up the majority of the world's 628 million unemployed youth. Barriers caused by gender inequity prevent girls from completing education and obtaining skills needed to access decent work and break the cycle of poverty. Sport is a tool that develops leadership and provides pathways for AGYW toward economic empowerment. In 2016, our data showed that 54% of girl participants strongly agreed with the statement 'I am a leader', compared to 29% at baseline, and 71 % strongly agreed that they would get a job one day, compared to 44% at baseline (Data collected through Women Win's monitoring and evaluation in 2016). However, sports (for development) organisations working with AGYW often focus on basic life skills and/or sports skills, without providing structured leadership and relevant skill-building opportunities.

Methodology, research design, and data analysis

LEEP has been designed through a human-centred design methodology, including input and co-creation from a number of organisations and the AGYW they serve. The LEEP strategy supports organisations to intentionally design their sports programmes to effectively deliver relevant opportunities and tailored roles for AGYW, resulting in improved economic empowerment outcomes.

Programme staff and participants are introduced to the framework through a participatory workshop. They design LEEP into their own programmes to ensure specific and appropriate pathways are developed for their target groups. Typically, the pathway includes several levels (e.g. participant > peer leader > assistant coach > coach > internship > economic empowerment outcome). AGYW build transferable life and livelihood skills as they advance through the levels. Peer leadership and mentorship are also central to the strategy, and leveraged to maximise skill development.

The economic empowerment outcomes for AGYW include employment, establishing an enterprise or access to further education. In the case of employment, AGYW may move into jobs within their sport (for development) organisations. LEEP guides organisations to provide structured development opportunities to ensure that past-participants can develop the necessary skills to become staff, thereby reducing the need to hiring professional coaches, life skill facilitators, project managers etc. Using this strategy, organisations can lower their cost per participant and create more sustainable sports programmes.

The strategy also recognises that only a small percentage of participants can be absorbed into any one organisation as staff. Therefore, LEEP also encourages organisations to link AGYW with job opportunities outside of their organisations and beyond sports programming (e.g. agriculture, tourism, retail, sports services, hospitality and other services sectors).

Results, discussion, and implications/conclusions

The LEEP framework has been piloted and is currently being implemented in India and Kenya. The Naz Foundation (India) has created, over the course of 10 years, structured leadership pathways for selected participants of the Goal Programme. According to a recent research study, the pathway provides participants with opportunities to take on roles and responsibilities and serve as valuable mentors and role models. Their 'Community Sports Coach' programme has evolved over time and increasingly seeks more effective development opportunities that ensure real economic empowerment outcomes for girls.

Creating pathways for AGYW is not without design and operational challenges for any organisation: it requires starting with the end goal in mind and expanding partnerships within the sports, development and

private sectors. We continue to experiment, adjust and learn with partners in Myanmar, South Africa and Uganda, who are in the early stages of contextualising and implementing LEEP. In addition, Women Win is beginning to implement the LEEP framework within the context of La League (See more at www.laleague.com), a football-based initiative led by Plan Netherlands in Brazil and Nicaragua.

In 2017 Women Win will finalise the Leadership and Economic Empowerment Guideline, an online resource that will guide organisations and individuals in designing their sport and development programs with leadership pathways in mind. The open-sourced guideline will encourage practitioners to share experiences and promising practices.

References

Perrot, M. (2015). *Young, Woman and Unemployed: The Triple Challenge*. Paris: Plan International.

Chawansky, M. & Mitra, P. (2015). *Voices and Visions of Girls in the Goal-Delhi Programme*.