

### **"Daily Lives of Adolescent Kenyan Girls"**

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An examination of the daily lives of girls in the Horn of Africa requires attention paid to geography, history, economy, and life opportunities. The picture for women can be bleak. In Kenya and the Horn of Africa, 65% of the population is under 25 years of age with females comprising a slight majority. To consider the challenges facing adolescent girls, Dr. Saavedra analyzed Mijikenda culture in Kalifi and one of the interesting aid organizations which uses sports to engage adolescent girls in essential life skills. Kalifi is one of the least developed districts in Kenya where HIV infection runs at 8%. The Mijikenda, an ethnic group different from Swahili and Kikuyu, speaks a different language and is relatively marginalized within the country. It is primarily a rural population.

Mijikenda family power usually resides at the intersection of patriarchy and gerontocracy. Older men are in control of major resources. First wives and older women are the most powerful women, but overall, women are under the control of many people. However, its traditional structure is changing: senior elder men are being toppled, often accused of witchcraft by younger men. Great poverty causes stress and dislocation upon the community's families. Although the old social structures were hierarchical, they nevertheless provided protection and allowed expectations. The safety net has since collapsed: survival has become more precarious, and domestic and sexual violence may have increased. Alcohol abuse has risen, particularly of palm wine, and has become all that some people do, all day long, alongside beer and other drugs such as banji (marijuana) and "brown sugar" (heroin). Along the coast, drugs like khat, a mild stimulant, is chewed.

As the society changes, cash income has become more important, and rural women have few opportunities for earning money. They sell vegetables and palm thatch on the street, work as maids in hotels, and do construction work, including road building with co-ed teams. Some engage in prostitution: foreigners' resorts and prostitution go together. There is little security for youth, particularly for adolescent girls. Primary school has been free since 2003, in accord with the Millennium Development Goals but early marriages and teenage pregnancies are endemic. Girls now show the highest rates of new HIV. Women's social and political power is limited. They voice their complaints through gossip, divination, and witchcraft charges.

Into this has stepped the organization [Moving the Goalposts](#). Its goal is the empowerment of girls through football (soccer). Founded in Kenya in 2001, and its motto, "Tunaweza," means "We can do it." In addition to building leadership skills and peer networking, the organization addresses reproductive health, human rights and economic empowerment.

Professor Saavedra explains the changes that this organization has made for rural young females of the region.

More information on Moving the Goalposts can be found at <http://mtgk.org/>

Dr. Saavedra's bibliography is online at

<http://orias.berkeley.edu/summer2011/PlayingByTheirRules.CaseStudyBibliography.pdf>