



Playing by Their Rules:

coastal teenage girls in Kenya
on life, love and football

Sarah Forde

In April 2001 the seeds of a girls' football and development programme were sown in Kilifi district, coastal Kenya. At that time using football was a radical approach to tackling some of the issues – early school drop-out, lack of opportunities, unintended pregnancies, gender inequity - that affected girls in the district. Eight years later, there are 3,000 girls playing football and accessing vital reproductive health information and social support in the Moving the Goalposts (MTG) project.

In 2005 the author, Sarah Forde, a journalist, development practitioner and trained football coach who had been with MTG from the outset, started to have in-depth discussions with nine teenage girls in the project. Over a two year period, in dusty classrooms, under the shade of trees, at the side of football pitches, Sarah sat with each girl and listened to what they had to say.

Playing by Their Rules tells the girls' stories. They are stories that expose how girls negotiate through their complex teenage years. We hear tales of their sexual dilemmas, the onset of menses, their fear of pregnancy, the prevalence of abortion and their school and home lives. They talk about how football both enriches and complicates their lives. Most of all, though, the book is an account of the author's journey into the girls' worlds - a unique telling of stories that are at times shocking, sometimes heart-warming but mostly enlightening for those of us who'd like to know more about the teenage lives of girls in East Africa.

'What an amazing book. It has the wow-I-just-cant-put-it-down page turner feeling. I am moved by the stories of these girls who are young and old at the same time. In between their tears and laughter I find voices of hope and determination for girls in Kilifi. Moving the Goalposts is not just about football. It is about coming to terms with one's sexuality and the transition into adulthood. That they face so many challenges, many of them not of their making, such as poverty and discrimination, and yet still manage to triumph is truly amazing. Indeed Tunaweza!'
Hon. Njoki S. Ndungu, former nominated MP and architect of the Sexual Offences Bill

If you would like to know how you can get a copy of the book please email playingbytheirrules@gmail.com or sarahforde_owuor@yahoo.com