



Kicks for Kokoda

Project Evaluation

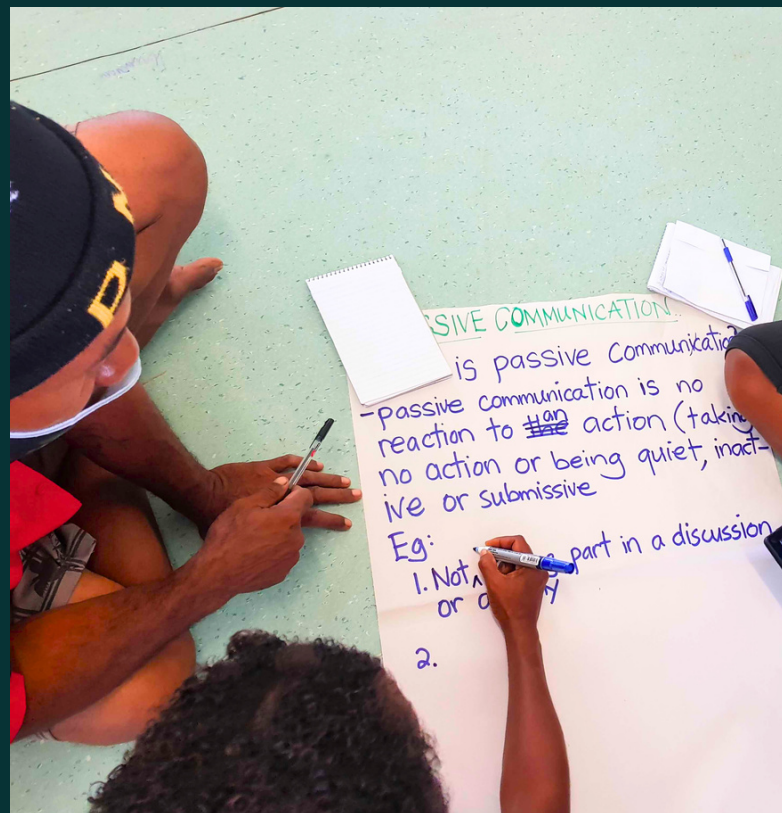


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Executive Summary

The Kicks for Kokoda (K4K) project, commencing in 2021, is a significant collaborative effort between the Kokoda Track Foundation (KTF), Grassroot Soccer, and the PNG Olympic Committee. This Sport for Development (S4D) initiative is strategically delivered in key locations in the Kokoda Track catchment, and aims to empower adolescents, foster health-seeking behaviours, deliver youth-friendly services, promote gender equality, and cultivate a passion for sports. K4K incorporates a sports-based SKILLZ curriculum and biannual sporting tournaments, whilst strategically integrating community health initiatives.

Strategically designed, K4K effectively embodies principles of best practice development, prioritising community involvement and locally-led principles. Leveraging partnerships, the project utilises KTF's extensive and longstanding community connections, Grassroot Soccer's evidence-based curriculum, and the PNG Olympic Committee's national-level influence. Notably, K4K addresses a critical gap in services, specifically targeting adolescents in remote and rural regions. The project's relevance and cohesiveness to community needs, existing efforts, and government priorities has led to substantial success.

The evaluation, conducted from October to November 2023, involved a comprehensive examination of data and documents provided by KTF and its partners. Consultations with project stakeholders guided the assessment, aligning with the Organisation for Economic Development's (OECD) evaluation criteria, also encompassing gender equity, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI).

This synthesis reflects a project that not only met its outlined objectives but also stands as an exemplary model of impactful, community-driven development.

Key Evaluation Findings:

- **Relevance:** The Kicks for Kokoda project stands out for its relevance, strategically addressing Papua New Guinea's challenges through a region-specific curriculum. The initiative's impact extends beyond individual adolescents, fostering societal change in gender beliefs, especially in rural and remote areas, and filling a unique gap in youth-focused programs, as affirmed by participating coaches who find the project uniquely impactful in their own professional roles.
- **Effectiveness:** The project has demonstrated exceptional effectiveness, meeting all targets and deliverables as well as ensuring gender parity among coaches and participants. The project's adaptability and adept responses to challenges have led to continuous improvements in implementation over its duration. The project's impact is notably pronounced among males as well as in extremely remote and rural villages. Significantly, it has played a crucial role in advancing gender equality and



enhancing knowledge on HIV, sexual and reproductive health, contraceptives, and reproductive healthcare.

- **Impact:** The project extends its impact beyond SKILLZ participants, having positively impacted coaches, teachers, healthcare workers, parents, and the wider community. Noteworthy, tangible impacts have been observed, fostering positive changes in attitudes and behaviours. The project's influence resonates throughout the community and has contributed to a more inclusive and empowered society.
- **Coherence:** The project demonstrates strong coherence with local schools and health services, gaining support from Provincial health and education authorities and enthusiastic endorsement from the participating communities. The project's strategic design ensures seamless integration with existing initiatives and aligns with community development priorities and the targeted needs of the region.
- **Efficiency:** The project demonstrates efficiency through rapid, observable changes in adolescent behaviour within three years. Acclaimed for accessibility, user-friendliness, and timely availability, project materials contribute to operational efficiency in a diverse and challenging setting. Cost-effective measures, such as leveraging existing facilities and employing locally recruited coaches, highlight commendable value for money. Moreover, the immeasurable value lies in empowering adolescents with life-saving information, ensuring sustained benefits without substantial ongoing investment.
- **Sustainability:** Several aspects of the project exhibit considerable sustainability. Coaches commit to continued use of project resources, particularly valuing the curriculum booklet. The project cultivates a community of 'game-changers,' with coaches and participants becoming enduring role models committed to sustaining positive change. Coaches express innovative plans for similar initiatives beyond the project's scope, emphasising its inspirational impact. Ongoing application of project values by participants in classrooms and sustained enthusiasm from parents highlight the enduring influence of the SKILLZ program. Notably, the project has met its objective of contributing to an increase in female sports participation. However, concerns about the need for ongoing financial support to deliver the SKILLZ curriculum raise considerations for this aspect of the project and impacts full sustainability.
- **GEDSI:** The project is dedicated to fostering inclusivity for women, girls, and people with disabilities throughout its implementation. It has successfully maintained gender parity among coaches and participants as well as yielded significant outcomes for gender equality. However, challenges persist in fully addressing disability inclusion due to cultural stigmas and parental concerns. The project has resulted in high satisfaction among participants with disabilities and has implemented strategic initiatives to enhance disability awareness and inclusion. Further efforts are required to continually improve disability inclusion within the project's framework.



Key Recommendations:

- **Attendance Rates:** Consider alternative session times, potentially in the mornings, and involve communities in deciding convenient days. Provide incentives like snacks to address hunger challenges and improve participant retention.
- **Sustainability:** Advocate for integrating the SKILLZ curriculum into regular academic schedules through established school relationships. Introduce an annual recognition program within schools to motivate positive attitude and behaviour changes, reinforcing the program's value.
- **Program Effectiveness:** Strategically align Coach Support Visits with challenging sessions, especially those covering sensitive topics. Ensure two Coach Support Visits during each 9-week intervention for targeted assistance and effective guidance.
- **Monitoring of Health Corners:** Develop and Implement improved monitoring methods, such as sign-in cards submitted into boxes to assess youth-friendly health corner utilisation systematically, whilst still maintaining the confidentiality of visitors. Collect data on usage patterns to gain insights into effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- **Amplify Project Impact:** Prioritise outreach to more remote locations where the SKILLZ curriculum has shown significant impact, contributing to positive behavioural changes. Extend the program to underserved communities with limited educational and healthcare access.
- **Impact on Broader Community:** Actively engage adults and parents during tournaments by organising tailored activities for them. Introduce game cards for adults, encouraging participation in various stations and information booths. Explore synergies with other projects, particularly those addressing gender-based violence and family and sexual violence, such as Project Zero.
- **Disability Inclusion:** Integrate Washington Group Set questions into the SKILLZ program enrollment process for identifying non-physical disabilities. Collaborate with a local Disabled Persons' organisation to promote inclusivity. Continue established strategies like featuring a para-Olympic athlete at tournaments and organising events on the International Day of People with Disabilities.



Project Overview

Context

Papua New Guinea faces multifaceted challenges across health, equality, child protection, and violence, exacerbated by a significant youth bulge, where 65.9 percent of the population is under 24 years old (UNFPA 2020). Economic hardships persist, with 40 percent of the 8.6 million population living below the poverty line (less than US\$1.90 or PGK 7.0 per day), ranking PNG 155 out of 189 on the Human Development Index (United Nations 2019).

Healthcare access is a pressing issue, marked by the lowest health status in the Pacific, limited resources, and a dispersed population in challenging locations. The underfunded and understaffed health system contributes to a low life expectancy, particularly outside provincial capitals and urban areas, where access to primary healthcare is intermittent due to numerous facilities being closed or barely functional.

Recent reports reveal escalating cases of malaria, whooping cough, and as of 2023, a 91% increase in HIV cases over the past three years. Maternal and neonatal mortality rates are alarming, and there is a significant 27.4 percent unmet need for contraception (World Bank, 2017).

Gender inequality is stark, with PNG ranking in the bottom 10 countries on the Gender Inequality Index. Women and girls face barriers to healthcare and education, and violence against women is pervasive, affecting an estimated two-thirds of women. The PNG Institute of Medical Research notes high adolescent fertility rates and maternal mortality, emphasising the urgent need for interventions.

Gender-based violence, particularly violence against women, is endemic, with more than two-thirds of women experiencing abuse. Limited data on sexual violence indicates reported rape rates at 44 percent, while cultural practices and high criminality contribute to the prevalence of sexual violence, especially among children, which is particularly concerning when considering that the nation's protection system grapples with limited resources, weak governance, and insufficient access to preventive and responsive services.

Additionally, data on disabilities is scarce, but estimates suggest that 13.4 percent of PNG's population has some form of disability, with only 2 percent receiving formal support. Structural barriers and societal norms contribute to the exclusion of people with disabilities, emphasising the need for comprehensive support and awareness.

In light of the challenging context in Papua New Guinea, marked by pervasive health issues, gender inequality, violence, and limited resources, the Kicks for Kokoda project



emerged as a critical initiative. Recognising the substantial youth bulge, high rates of poverty, and the pressing need for comprehensive health education, the project was conceived to tackle these multifaceted challenges. With a focus on adolescents, the project aims to bridge gaps in sexual and reproductive health knowledge, improve access to vital health services, dismantle gender barriers, and foster positive behavioural change. By strategically targeting a demographic vulnerable to the identified issues, the Kicks for Kokoda project endeavours to contribute to a healthier, more equitable, and resilient community, addressing the unique needs and complexities faced by the youth in Papua New Guinea.

The adolescent birth rate in PNG is high at 13%, and 22% of 19-year old women have at least one child and 6% have two or more children (UNFPA).

Youth binge drinking among 15 to 19 year olds is at a 64.7% prevalence, and particularly high for boys at 73.4% (WHO).



Project Description

Partners

Kicks 4 Kokoda is the result of a dynamic partnership between KTF, Grassroot Soccer (GRS), and the Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee (PNGOC), aiming to implement evidence-based Sport for Development programming. KTF, with over two decades of closely working with the communities in the Kokoda Track catchment, has led the project implementation. Leveraging its extensive experience and operational expertise KTF has aimed to ensure the project aligns with high operational standards, including safeguarding. Additionally, the organisation operates 14 aid posts in the region, employs healthcare workers, and collaborates closely with the National and Provincial health and education authorities.

Grassroot Soccer, renowned for its global standard curriculum 'SKILLZ,' brings its expertise as an adolescent health organisation that utilises soccer to empower young people. With a reach of 2.7 million youth globally, GRS focuses on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender-based violence prevention, positive youth development, and community norms change. As an international technical assistance provider, GRS has supported the project with evidence-based strategies, youth-centred program design, localised curriculum development, mentor training, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

The Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee plays a pivotal role in developing the nation's elite athletes and fostering a culture of peace and betterment through sport aligned with Olympism values. With a commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and safety in sports, PNGOC actively engages in the Kicks 4 Kokoda program, utilising its athletes as inspirational figures. PNGOC athletes serve as role models, especially encouraging the involvement of young women in sport and social development. Their participation also plays a vital role in promoting inclusivity, particularly for people with disabilities.

Local communities are also integral partners, with their adolescents actively participating in the program. Beyond individual involvement, communities contribute significantly to the organisation of tournaments, emphasising the collaborative and community-driven nature of the Kicks 4 Kokoda initiative.

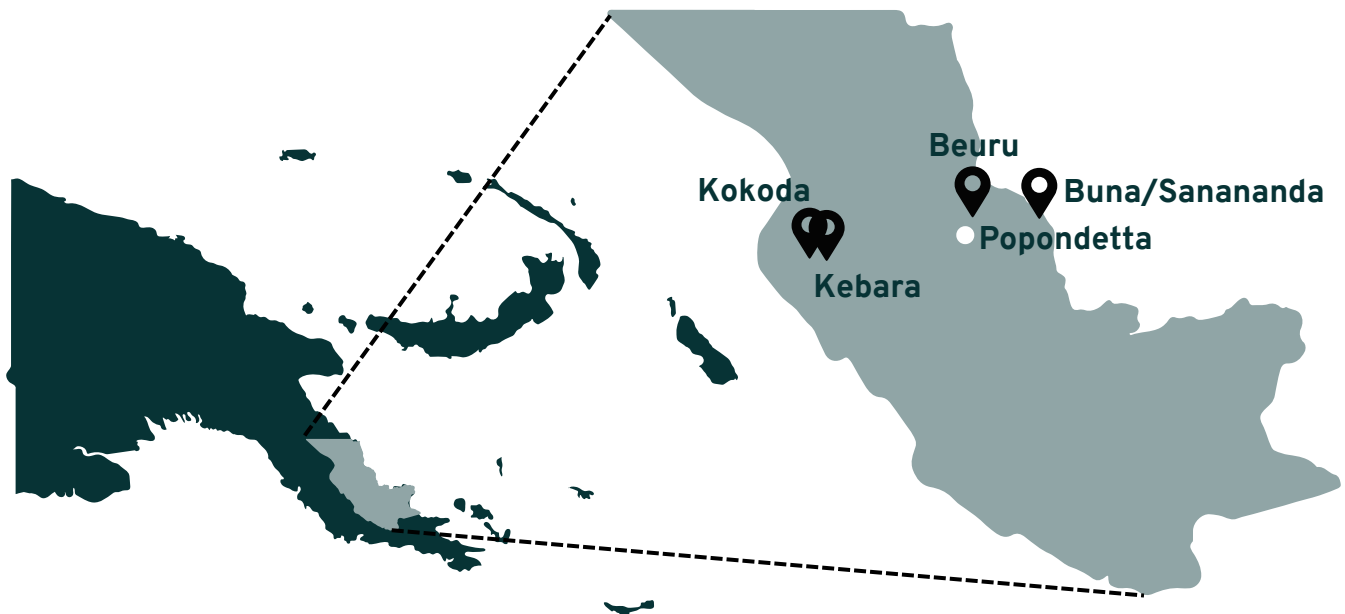


Project Implementation

The inception of the Kicks for Kokoda project was rooted in extensive community consultation and a three-day Project Design workshop, ensuring a community-driven approach. Taking place in Popondetta, the nearest town centre conveniently located between project sites, the project brought together health workers, school teachers, community leaders, the Kokoda Memorial Hospital Health Extension Officer, representatives of the National Provincial Health Authorities (NPHA), and adolescent males and females who were accompanied by their parents. As the workshop took place in 2021, lockdown measures were in place in Australia and many parts of the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, restricting travel. Therefore, PNG Olympic Committee led the workshop in person, whilst partners KTF and Grassroot Soccer joined in via video conferencing. The project design workshop began with an introduction to the project for workshop participants and then focused primarily on the development of the SKILLZ Curriculum, led by Grassroot Soccer.

Leveraging existing relationships with healthcare facilities, the initial project locations, Kokoda and Buna/Sanananda villages, were identified. Subsequent rounds expanded to Kebara, and Beuru, strategically chosen to address specific community needs.

2021	2022	2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kokoda • Buna/Sanananda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kokoda • Buna/Sanananda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kokoda • Beuru • Kebara



Project objectives aimed to enhance adolescents' linkage to healthcare, foster positive youth development, improve health outcomes, and boost engagement in sports, particularly amongst girls. The recruitment process for community coaches involved a thorough application review, followed by interviews and final selection offers.

Coaches underwent training focused on understanding adolescent mindsets, promoting inclusive and gender-equitable community engagement, facilitating the uptake of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and GBV services, and delivering the "Relationship SKILLZ" program—a mixed-gender, nine-session, sport-based intervention. As mentors and role models, coaches encourage active participation in sports, guide adolescents through navigating the health system, and promote health-seeking behaviours.

Coach Support Visits, utilising the Grassroot Soccer teachback scale, play a crucial role in fostering continuous improvement, learning, and strengthening of program delivery for partner staff and Coaches involved in the Kicks for Kokoda project. Throughout the delivery of the project, Coach Support Visits generally took place once every intervention cycle.

Participants for the SKILLZ intervention were identified through community consultations conducted by healthcare workers and teachers. The initial community consultation took place in 2021 prior to the outset of the project, aiming to communicate the project's objectives and generate participant lists. These information and awareness sessions have continued each year, to reiterate the project's focus on using team sports to develop adolescent's knowledge of SRHR and life skills as well as ensure ongoing community involvement and understanding.

Program content includes the following topics:

- Human rights with a focus on interpersonal rights
- Understanding the difference between sex, gender, and the effects of gender expectations
- Power dynamics between men and women and the promotion of equal power in communities
- Discussions on puberty, sexual hygiene, the menstrual cycle, and pregnancy
- Learning the use of condoms and contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancy, and fertility in males and females
- Consent and sexual abuse in relationships
- Consequences of rape and sexual abuse
- Define healthy relationships and steps to have healthier relationships
- Peer pressure and types of communication (Assertive, Passive and Aggressive)
- How to set goals and how to overcome obstacles to achieve their goals

The sessions for the SKILLZ practices follow a structured format. Commencing with an active warm-up, participants then engage in an in-class discussion lasting 10-20 minutes, addressing specific topics identified in the curriculum. Subsequently, participants moved outdoors for a 20-minute practical session focused on real-life experiences related to the practice theme through soccer games. The session concludes



with a 10-minute cool-down, during which participants share stories and experiences. The discussions often involve scenarios related to project-specific issues, derived from the Project Design Workshop. Coaches offer additional support, making themselves available for further chats after the practice concludes to ensure participant understanding and address any concerns or questions.

The project conducts baseline and follow-up assessments using pre- and post-intervention surveys. These surveys aim to gauge changes in participants' knowledge, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward gender norms. Featuring sixteen questions with agree or disagree response formats, the surveys are designed to be accessible for participants of all ages, facilitating effective data collection.

Sporting tournaments, held at the end of every SKILLZ intervention are organised in collaboration with the PNG Olympic Committee and led by elite athletes. These tournaments serve as community events promoting engagement in sports, particularly for females and people with disabilities, not only inspire athletes to embody Olympic values and talent identification but also act as unique service delivery points for health providers to address SRHR and GBV, facilitating access to primary healthcare services in a non-traditional setting. This approach was aimed at reaching specific population subsets, including adolescents, who might not typically seek care at traditional health facilities.

Another aspect of the project was the establishment of Youth-Friendly Health Corners to ensure that the available services meet the needs of young people. SKILLZ Coaches supported adolescents in an inclusive design process to develop these spaces in KTF's relevant health facilities. These spaces provide free male and female condoms, free testing for HIV and syphilis, hygiene items, pamphlets on prevention of communicable diseases including malaria, tuberculosis, STIs, and contraception. Community Health Workers are also available to provide confidential health advice and referral pathways for victims of violence.



Community consultations (above left) and the Project Design Workshop (above right) were held to determine the needs of the community and incorporate findings into the development of the SKILLZ curriculum, ensuring the project was highly relevant to the participants.



About Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the impact and effectiveness of the Kicks for Kokoda project in reducing barriers to full participation in sports and school, improving adolescents' knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, increasing self-confidence and self-efficacy and improving attitudes towards gender norms.

Evaluation Criteria

This evaluation draws on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) evaluation guidance on using and applying evaluation criteria. The OECD suggests six key criteria—relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability—by which to measure intervention efforts. Additionally, GEDSI has been added as an additional lens to measure success in this crosscutting theme. These criteria allow for a thorough understanding and assessment of the project and have served as a foundation for consultation questions, providing a structured and rigorous approach to the evaluation.

Criteria	Description
Relevance	Are the projects aims and objectives still relevant and important, and are the project activities consistent with the aim of the project?
Effectiveness	Is the project achieving its intended objectives? What has happened as a result of the project?
Efficiency	Are the activities cost-efficient and do they deliver on intended outputs in a timely manner?
Impact	What difference does the intervention make?
Coherence	How well does the intervention fit?
Sustainability	To what extent will the benefits of the project continue after the donor funding ceases? What are the recommendations for ongoing sustainability of the program?
GEDSI	To what extent does the project address and advance gender equality and social inclusion goals? What observable changes are occurring in terms of fostering inclusivity and equitable participation?



Methodology

This evaluation was conducted during October and November 2023 during the third year of the project's implementation, signifying a mid-term point in the four-year project timeline. With a wealth of data accumulated over this duration and encompassing diverse locations and substantial sample size, the analysis is poised to deliver a rigorous and academically insightful examination of the project's impact and effectiveness.

The approach consisted of a two-step methodology:

1. Desk Review

This evaluation began with an in-depth desktop review of relevant documents, including the project design, to establish a foundational understanding. An examination of three years' worth of pre-and post-intervention surveys, encompassing over 750 participants, provided quantitative insights into project outcomes. Qualitative data, accumulated extensively throughout the project's duration due to donor reporting requirements, underwent a thorough review to discern progress made towards desired outcomes in adolescent project participants and the wider community.

2. Consultations

To further elucidate the findings of the quantitative data, consultation questions were formulated and presented to coaches and select teachers involved in the project, with data collection facilitated by the project manager. An additional consultation was conducted with the Head of Health.

This blended approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data sources, enables a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Kicks for Kokoda project's impact and effectiveness.

Limitations

The evaluation's internal nature poses a potential limitation, as internal reviews may be susceptible to biases and a lack of external perspectives. While efforts were made to maintain objectivity, the absence of external validation could impact the comprehensiveness of the assessment.



Findings

This evaluation has scored Kicks for Kokoda a total of 33/35 when assessed against seven evaluation criteria.

Criteria	Score (out of 5)
Relevance	5
Effectiveness	5
Efficiency	5
Impact	5
Coherence	5
Sustainability	4
GEDSI	4

Relevance

This evaluation has established the Kicks for Kokoda project as profoundly relevant. Originating as a strategic response to the multifaceted challenges faced in PNG, encompassing health, gender equality, child protection, and violence prevention, the project has strategically targeted the burgeoning youth population. The persistence of these challenges, notably discerned in Oro Province, demonstrates the ongoing relevance of the project's objectives.

A significant aspect of the project that has strengthened its relevance is the region-specific curriculum developed through the Project Design Workshop. During this workshop, extensive consultations and discussions were conducted with a diverse range of stakeholders to identify specific challenges faced in the target communities. This information was subsequently utilised by Grassroot Soccer to develop a specific curriculum to address the highlighted issues. The challenges that were noted by communities centred around alcohol and drug abuse, unwanted and underage pregnancies, and gender and family-sexual violence. Grassroot Soccer designed training and discussion prompts on these topics and incorporated them into the existing SKILLZ sessions, which already included STIs/HIV and gender equality. Specific scenarios were included for discussion during the SKILLZ sessions, that utilised genuine examples and experiences from workshop participants. Extensive efforts were undertaken to not only include training on these issues but also focus on finer details such as ensuring names



used in scenarios were appropriate to the local contexts. The culmination of these efforts, deriving from the critical Project Design Workshop, highlights the significant relevance of the project and demonstrates its commitment to ensuring activities are meaningful and align intricately with the persisting needs of the region. Consultations consistently demonstrated the project's integral role in addressing the challenges faced by youth, with a shared belief that its impact extends beyond individual adolescents, also resonating within families and community leadership domains. A recurring theme within consultations emphasised the project's significance as a progressive catalyst for a child's integral human development, highlighting the project's broader societal implications. Coaches, as primary agents of the project's implementation, uniformly emphasised its relevance, deeming it both impactful and essential in addressing the multifaceted challenges confronted by the youth.

Significantly, the sustained interest in project activities, demonstrated by participants, parents, and teachers within the communities, has further amplified its broader societal significance. The project's aims were found particularly indispensable in these rural and remote areas, where it was noted in consultations that enduring challenges exist regarding the mindset on gender equality and the prevailing beliefs that women are not equal to men. The resonating impact of the tournaments, which were noted as particularly novel and impactful experiences for these communities, further solidifies the project's alignment with local needs and desires.

Additionally, it was found that the absence of comparable programs focused on youth, sexual and reproductive health services, or gender equality in these regions indicates a noteworthy gap filled by the Kicks for Kokoda project. Coaches universally expressed being unaware of any similar initiatives, demonstrating the project's unique relevance. While one teacher acknowledged the engagement of Juvenile Officers and Officers in Family and Sexual Violence work in schools, they noted the constraints on time for in-depth discussions on these critical topics, emphasising the demand and distinctiveness of the project activities.

The Kicks for Kokoda project has demonstrated significant relevance for coaches, particularly those who are also teachers or healthcare workers, presenting a unique and impactful approach to their professional roles.



For teachers doubling as coaches, the initiative has introduced an alternative and non-formal setting for interaction with students. The outdoor environment fosters a more exciting and informal learning atmosphere, encouraging students to ask questions and engage more openly. This setting not only enriches the learning experience for students but also provides teachers with a new platform to connect with their students, offering a fresh perspective on their roles beyond the traditional classroom environment.

Similarly, for healthcare workers serving as coaches, the project holds great relevance by offering an opportunity to expand their knowledge of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The intervention also equips healthcare workers with effective ways to engage with adolescents, bridging the connection between the SKILLZ sessions and the Youth Friendly Health Corners. This enhanced engagement is intended to increase the utilisation of health services by adolescents. Notably, one healthcare worker expressed gratitude for the chance to deliver interventions tailored to this demographic, acknowledging that they often do not interact extensively with this age group in their regular roles. The project, in a sense, compels healthcare workers to engage with a population they might not otherwise reach, demonstrating its relevance and impact on broader health outreach.

“I am pleased to learn about the Kicks 4 Kokoda project, this is a very important initiative. I see many problems in the province with teenage pregnancy and abuse of alcohol and drugs, particularly in rural areas. We have health programs for younger children but there are no government programs that address the health needs of adolescents, this is a gap that needs to be filled. Thank you KTF, Grassroot Soccer, and PNGOC.”

-James Yangano, Health District Manager for Ijivitari, NPHA



Effectiveness

In assessing the effectiveness of the Kicks for Kokoda project, the alignment with its initial objectives is paramount. This evaluation reveals that the project has not only met but exceeded its aims, affirming its high level of effectiveness.

Originally designed to execute two 9-week interventions, each catering to 250 adolescent participants, totalling 500 participants, the project not only successfully delivered these cycles but garnered further endorsement from the donor for an additional two years. The first of these extended periods has already been completed.

A significant improvement to the project structure involved adding an extra session, increasing the total from 8 sessions to 9. This decision stemmed from insights gathered during the project design workshop, emphasising the need to comprehensively address essential topics, such as alcohol and drug awareness, pregnancy prevention, and gender-based violence and family and sexual violence. This purposeful expansion significantly strengthened the project's effectiveness, ensuring a more thorough exploration of crucial issues.

While the initial cycle achieved 215 participants, subsequent rounds observed a substantial increase to 250 participants in the second cycle and a remarkable 306 in the third, culminating in a total of 771 adolescents engaged in the project. The initial lower participation numbers were attributed to less community awareness and familiarity with the project's activities. However, communities responded positively, demonstrating increased enthusiasm in subsequent rounds. This uptick in participation numbers not only demonstrates the project's success but also highlights the strong support and endorsement it has garnered within the community, underscoring its effectiveness in addressing the identified needs and resonating with the target audience.

While the Kicks for Kokoda project did not establish specific graduation rate targets in its design, Grassroot Soccer typically observes graduation rates exceeding 90% in its interventions. The graduation criterion involves participants attending a minimum of 7 out of the 9 sessions. However, the Kokoda region presents unique challenges not commonly encountered in more urban settings where Grassroot Soccer interventions usually take place.

Intervention Summary	2021	2022	2023
Interventions Completed*	10	10	10
Total Participants	215**	250	306
Percent Females	49.3%	49.8%	55.9%
Total Graduates	168	185	239
Percent Graduated	78%	74%	78%

*Interventions consisted of the 9-week SKILLZ curriculum plus graduation.

**Participant numbers in 2021 had to be reduced from the total target of 250 to comply with PNG Government restrictions on gatherings. This also resulted in tournaments being postponed until 2021.



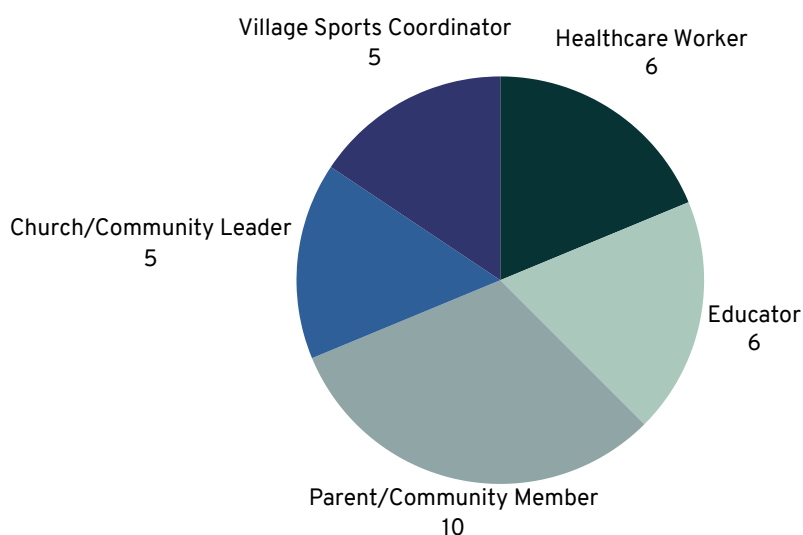
In contrast to urban areas, participants in the Kokoda region face substantial challenges in attending sessions. The primary impediment is the considerable distance participants must traverse to reach the schools where the interventions are held, with some walking for over an hour, including potentially crossing rivers. The region's susceptibility to seasonal and adverse weather conditions, including frequent floods, renders attendance impossible during certain periods. Furthermore, the region's prevalence of violence and conflict poses safety concerns for participants, at times even resulting in lockdowns that disrupted session delivery.

Coaches also identified additional factors impacting attendance and graduation rates, such as students being tired or hungry after a full day at school, prompting them to head home instead of attending sessions. Coaches suggested potential solutions, including providing snacks or shifting sessions to the mornings to increase attendance. Additionally, some coaches noted that perhaps participants weren't aware of the requirements for graduation, so additional encouragement from Coaches and teachers as well as reconsidering different tactics for advertising the project and explaining obligations at the outset of the intervention may be beneficial.

In 2023, a new challenge emerged, as the reopening of the trekking industry—a significant source of income for the region—introduced competition for coaches. Some coaches opted to pursue opportunities in the trekking industry instead of continuing their coaching duties, further influencing participation rates and program continuity.

The original plan for the Kicks for Kokoda project included training 10 Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) in each location each project cycle, aiming for a balanced gender distribution. However, the project received a surplus of applications for coaching positions, encompassing VHVs, Community Health Workers, teachers, and community members. Recognising the benefits of involving teachers as coaches due to their pre-existing connections with students and adeptness in managing adolescent groups, the project expanded its scope. The inclusion of teachers and community members as coaches alongside health workers members has proven effective, leveraging diverse skills and enabling the utilisation of schools as convenient intervention settings, leading to considerable cost savings. Notably, the project achieved gender parity among coaches, with a higher representation of female coaches in all rounds. This inclusive approach to coach recruitment has been instrumental in the overall effectiveness of the project, fostering a collaborative and diverse coaching team.

SKILLZ Coaches by Role



Ensuring gender parity among participants was also a key objective of the project. The project successfully met this goal every year, with the percentage of girls increasing annually, demonstrating the effectiveness of the project in achieving this objective.

	2021	2022	2023
Female Coaches	10 (55%)	10 (55%)	11 (55%)
Male Coaches	8	8	9

The tournaments organised as part of Kicks for Kokoda were highly successful, generating significant community engagement and satisfaction. While coaches acknowledged the challenges involved in hosting these events, they noted that the communities and adolescents actively contributed to the necessary work, demonstrating community ownership of project activities. Various partners of KTF also played instrumental roles in ensuring the success of the tournaments, with booths manned by GBV and health providers from across the region.

Health testing conducted during the tournaments faced initial hesitancy, particularly regarding HIV testing due to associated stigma and fear. To address this, KTF implemented strategic measures, including awareness campaigns delivered by Lillymaud, an HIV specialist from Popondetta General Hospital, to educate communities about HIV and available treatments. The involvement of PNG Hero Athletes as role models who openly got tested at the tournaments also significantly contributed to overcoming barriers, encouraging more individuals to come forward for testing. Adolescents, influenced by the SKILLZ intervention's messaging on the importance of testing, formed a substantial portion of those voluntarily undergoing testing at the tournaments, indicating the effectiveness of the SKILLZ curriculum and messaging.

During one tournament, health testing for HIV and Syphilis was conducted by Popondetta General Hospital staff and offered free to the community. Notably, 73% of the individuals tested for HIV were adolescents aged 12-19, with 64% being first-time testers. Additionally, 12% tested positive for syphilis, all within the age range of 15-19, and immediate on-the-spot treatment was provided for all positive cases.

Youth-friendly health corners were established in existing aid posts in Buna, Sanananda, Beuru, and Kokoda College, and health workers have allocated times for adolescent-only periods. However, there is not currently a corner established in Kebara as KTF does not have existing health facilities in this village. Recently, Kokoda Memorial Hospital has donated a stand-alone space that will be transformed into an area for youth. It is expected that this space will be more effective.



Extensive data was collected throughout the project via pre- and post-intervention surveys. Analysis of this data indicates the project's curriculum was highly effective. Overall, there were substantial increases in scores across all questions. However, the first year yielded a few slightly negative results, attributed to coaches not fully understanding the questions, hindering effective communication to participants. To address this issue, KTF sought guidance from Grassroot Soccer, subsequently providing specific training to coaches. Coaches responded positively to the feedback and additional training. In 2022, existing coaches underwent refresher training, which included further instruction on these topics. These efforts successfully resolved the problem, leading to positive outcomes in all subsequent rounds of the project.

One notable aspect of the data is the consistent increase in the overall average percentage change year on year, despite the concurrent rise in average baseline scores. This trend suggests that the project is becoming progressively more effective. It is likely attributed to coaches' growing familiarity with the SKILLZ Curriculum and ongoing support from teachers and the community, who continually enhance their understanding and promotion of the project.

Question-by-Question Summary (All Participants)	2021 Pre	2021 Post	2021 Δ	2022 Pre	2022 Post	2022 Δ	2023 Pre	2023 Post	2023 Δ
I know how to communicate effectively with the opposite sex.	53%	78%	47%	55%	73%	33%	63%	91%	45%
Condoms are the only contraceptive method that protect against pregnancy as well as STIs and HIV.	68%	91%	33%	43%	77%	78%	59%	88%	49%
I know where to get support services for me or someone else, for gender based violence or rape.	53%	96%	80%	54%	80%	48%	55%	92%	68%
I know the steps I need to take in order to achieve my goals in life.	75%	99%	32%	62%	83%	35%	66%	92%	38%
People who abuse alcohol are more likely to engage in risky behaviours, such as violence or unprotected sex.	41%	86%	107%	37%	77%	107%	53%	72%	36%
I know at least three methods to avoid an unwanted pregnancy.	45%	92%	105%	50%	72%	45%	39%	85%	115%
I know where to get support services for me or someone else, on contraceptive use.	69%	88%	28%	50%	76%	51%	54%	89%	65%
I know where to go if I have questions about the changes that are happening in my body.	75%	97%	29%	57%	77%	35%	74%	90%	22%
Boys and men should share all household chores, such as cooking and fetching water.	33%	33%	0%	55%	77%	39%	61%	80%	32%
It is a man's responsibility to make decisions in a relationship.	52%	37%	-29%	48%	58%	21%	39%	78%	97%
I can make the choice to protect myself from HIV/STIs/pregnancy if I have sex.	32%	18%	-43%	54%	75%	40%	60%	84%	41%
I can abstain from sex until I am older, even if it is difficult.	54%	84%	55%	46%	70%	53%	51%	77%	52%
I don't always have to do what people expect because I am a boy/girl.	64%	78%	22%	56%	81%	46%	58%	81%	39%
It is okay for a man to hit his girlfriend.	19%	27%	42%	66%	94%	42%	60%	88%	47%
I have a supporter in my life who I can go to if I need help.	10%	9%	-12%	74%	95%	29%	78%	97%	24%
I can make my own informed decisions about my sexual healthcare.	75%	84%	12%	61%	89%	45%	59%	89%	50%
Overall	51%	68%	34%	54%	78%	45%	58%	86%	48%

It's noteworthy that there are discernible differences in the experiences of girls and boys with the SKILLZ curriculum. Girls scored higher on 14 out of 16 questions in the pre-survey and higher on all questions in the post-survey. This suggests that females initially possess greater knowledge and more positive attitudes toward these topics, along with better support systems and self-efficacy at both the project's commencement and completion. However, girls had higher percentage increases on only 11 out of the 16 questions. This implies that the lessons imparted during the project had a particularly impactful effect on male participants.

Significant variations arise when comparing the results of pre-and post-intervention surveys across project locations. Kebara generally exhibited the greatest percentage changes, albeit starting at the lowest baseline, closely followed by Beuru in both starting points and percent increases. In contrast, Kokoda displayed the lowest percentage changes and the highest starting point.

These differences are believed to stem from various factors. According to KTF's Head of Health, villages in the Kokoda catchment benefit from substantial government and non-governmental organisation support, given its historical significance related to the Kokoda Track and World War II. Moreover, Kokoda has access to a range of educational offerings, including early childhood, elementary, primary, and FODE (Flexible Open Distance Education) options. In contrast, Beuru, though closer to Popondetta, lacks a secondary school and is purported to face a higher prevalence of societal issues. Similarly, Kebara, although located in the Kokoda catchment region, has had less engagement with the project and has fewer educational opportunities.

Hence, the project and the SKILLZ curriculum likely demonstrate greater effectiveness and impact in more remote areas, where these topics are novel, and limited access to education opportunities and healthcare results in fewer instances of similar messaging.

Location	Average Baseline Score
Kebara	31%
Beuru	45%
Buna/Sanananda	59%
Kokoda	60%




Location	Average % Change
Kebara	162%
Beuru	101%
Buna/Sanananda	42%
Kokoda	38%



Additionally, when questions are grouped by categories, meaningful data emerges. Grassroots Soccer typically divides questions into the following categories for enhanced analysis:

- "Participants who feel supported in life"
- "Self-Efficacy"
- "Participants with increased comprehensive knowledge of HIV and other SRHR Services"
- "Decision regarding contraceptives, sexual relationships, reproductive healthcare"
- "Attitudes and beliefs regarding gender norms"

Participants recorded their highest pre-survey scores in both 'Participants who feel supported in life' and 'Self-efficacy.' The most significant changes occurred in the categories of 'Participants with increased comprehensive knowledge of HIV and other SRHR Services' and 'Decision regarding contraceptives, sexual relationships, reproductive healthcare,' demonstrating the SKILLZ curriculum's particular effectiveness in teaching these crucial topics. This success in imparting knowledge on HIV and SRHR services, as well as aiding informed decision-making, reflects positively on the program's impact.

Pre-test Rank by Category	Post-test Rank by Category	% Change
Participants who feel supported in life	Participants who feel supported in life	14%
Self-Efficacy	Self-Efficacy	18%
Attitudes and beliefs regarding gender norms	Participants with increased comprehensive knowledge of HIV and other SRHR Services 	22%
Participants with increased comprehensive knowledge of HIV and other SRHR Services	Decision regarding contraceptives, sexual relationships, reproductive healthcare 	21%
Decision regarding contraceptives, sexual relationships, reproductive healthcare	Attitudes and beliefs regarding gender norms 	11%

Participants recorded their highest pre-survey scores in both 'Participants who feel supported in life' and 'Self-efficacy.' The most significant changes occurred in the categories of 'Participants with increased comprehensive knowledge of HIV and other SRHR Services' and 'Decision regarding contraceptives, sexual relationships, reproductive healthcare,' demonstrating the SKILLZ curriculum's particular



effectiveness in teaching these crucial topics. This success in imparting knowledge on HIV and SRHR services, as well as aiding informed decision-making, reflects positively on the program's impact.

While all categories demonstrated improvements, the lowest percentage change was observed in 'Attitudes and beliefs regarding gender norms,' suggesting that these lessons might be less effective or impactful. To enhance the SKILLZ curriculum and the intervention overall, it could be beneficial to consider additional lessons focusing on this category or closely examine the current implementation of these lessons to identify areas for improvement.

The effectiveness of the SKILLZ intervention is palpable, as both teachers and coaches have keenly observed tangible impacts on participating students. Students who engaged in the program are reported to be making improved choices, displaying heightened positivity, increased responsibility and self-confidence, and demonstrating enhanced leadership qualities. Notably, a positive shift in the dynamics between boys and girls is evident, with boys exhibiting greater consideration and respect towards their female peers, fostering more collaborative activities. The broader community, including parents, has also acknowledged these noticeable differences in the adolescents, particularly highlighting significant positive changes among boys, further attesting to the effectiveness of the SKILLZ curriculum in influencing attitudes and behaviours. Moreover, coaches and teachers have acknowledged the effectiveness of the training in enhancing their comprehension of adolescent behaviour.



**Paolo Talanoa, SKILLZ
Coach & Community
Sport Coordinator**

“This program has changed a lot of the participants’ behaviours. Parents have also noticed changes in their children, parents and teachers approach us with praises about the changes they are seeing in the children. Participants are taking on responsibilities of their own and also taking the lead in school and community activities. This program helps everyone make better choices in life. Sport makes people respect themselves and others.”



**Branchley Pore, SKILLZ
Coach & Primary School
Teacher**

“Personally as a mother of three adolescents, it has greatly helped me to re-assess myself to safeguard and educate my biological children in some areas of importance that I don’t open up to talk about. This project has made me gain confidence to break barriers that sometimes limited me.”



**Jessica Harika, SKILLZ
Coach & Community
Health Worker**

“Becoming a SKILLZ Coach has developed my knowledge, skills and approaches to the young people, especially my children in my family, in a positive way so that they may be good citizens in PNG.”

Impact

Through consultations, it was found that the project has successfully impacted parents by bringing about a significant shift in parental perspectives as well as fostering a deeper understanding of the importance of balanced gender responsibilities within the household. Testimonials from coaches highlight the project's influence in reshaping parenting dynamics. Parents have not only demonstrated increased capacity to support their children but have also engaged in introspection, with one coach noting that they believe the project has instigated parents to re-evaluate their own upbringing experiences and challenges and how this may impact their parenting skills.

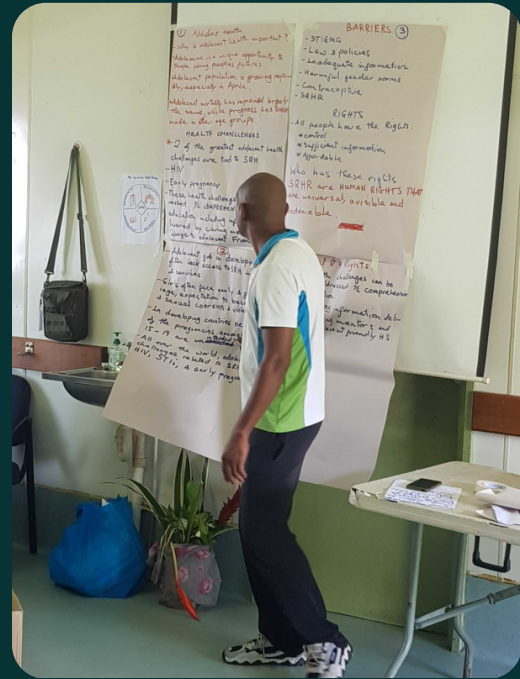
For coaches, the project has been a catalyst for positive change, particularly for those who wear multiple hats as educators and healthcare providers. Several coaches noted the impact that the new job opportunity presented on their livelihood outcomes. Additionally, one coach noted that the project is causing them to undergo a transformative process in their cultural perceptions, recognising the gradual nature of cultural change in Papua New Guinea, particularly in how children are treated. Coaches are also embracing their positions as role models. This shift is not only influencing their interactions with adolescents but has been reported to also improve their capacity to advocate on behalf of their students or patients. One coach who is also a CHW described how they noticed increased respect and openness from the adolescents they coach, both outside the aid post and during medical consultations, also noting that the participants they coached prefer to visit their aid post to receive treatment when possible, further demonstrating the success of the project in improving and increasing access to health care for adolescents.

In the classroom setting, teachers who are also parents are witnessing tangible behavioural changes among students. The celebration of uniqueness, increased respect, and a willingness to engage in open discussions on topics like gender equality signal the positive impact of the project on adolescent participants. Also notably, three participants have been identified to represent their communities in the PNG Games, showcasing the broader implications of the project on fostering talent and participation, as outlined as an objective in the project design.

The impact radiates throughout the wider community, emphasising the transformative power of the Kicks for Kokoda project. Coaches unanimously affirm its significance, recognising that the benefits extend beyond the children directly involved. The strategic involvement of the PNGOC has proven particularly impactful, acting as a catalyst for community engagement. The introduction of tournaments, a novel and enjoyable addition, has created a positive buzz, marking the project as not only impactful but also a source of joy and community bonding.

In conclusion, the Kicks for Kokoda project has undeniably achieved its objective of creating a movement of 'game-changers' within the community. The transformative impact on parents, coaches, adolescents, and the wider community attests to the success of the project in instigating positive attitudinal and behavioural changes.





In my role as a Community Health Worker, I attend to patients on a daily basis at the health facility. With regards to Kicks for Kokoda, I work as a coach and supervisor, I help to educate the children on sexual reproductive health and changing behaviour, and help to do awareness to the people in the community as well.

Most importantly, I act as a supervisor to the coaches in the program. I help them to make sure that each session in the program gets delivered on time to the participants so that the students can safely return back to their homes.

I enjoy working with the children in the program. I feel that I missed working with children because as a healthcare worker, most of my time had been spent working with adults. This program has given me an opportunity to work with them. In terms of interacting with them, I find it to be very interesting for me. There are certain parts of the program that were discussed in the activities that made interacting and communicating with them more interesting. There are things that they are going through, like knowing about reproductive health rights. I never learnt about some of these things when I was young, I never even practiced them. I can see how this program is really helping these young adolescents to know and understand their rights at this stage of their lives.

As a CHW in the program, I feel that the participants are more free and open to come to me and talk openly on some sensitive health issues that they face. We always try our best to help the participants. I feel that K4K has helped me to connect well with the participants. There is a positive impact with many girls coming to attend the program. Girls feel safer to open up and talk about sexual reproductive health and their rights as females.

In the program, I have also seen that there is more gender equality involved and the girls are more respected. The boys have realised that and have changed so much from when they first started on this program. Boys used to bully the girls before, but now they have realised that girls are equal to them and have the same rights as them. They realised that what they used to do before was wrong and now they are changing and making wise decisions.



Coherence

Throughout consultations, a prevailing theme emerged affirming the high level of coherence the Kicks for Kokoda project has within the communities, schools, and health initiatives. Coaches and teachers attested to the seamless alignment of the project's activities and teachings with the objectives of the schools. This consensus was particularly evident in the resonance between the SKILLZ curriculum and schools' objectives, with many educators incorporating similar lessons for adolescents. The adaptability of the SKILLZ teachings was noted, with several educators currently integrating these lessons into classroom settings. Teachers emphasised that the SKILLZ sessions served as 'eye-openers' for students, catalysing shifts in self-perception, increasing confidence levels, and having positive impacts on academic goals and aspirations.

The project garnered unwavering support from the Provincial Education Authorities, who acknowledged the significance of teachings that often go overlooked in traditional school curricula. The seamless alignment of SKILLZ curriculum lessons with behavioural management policies within schools reflects the project's careful integration into the educational framework. Teachers and parents alike appreciate the value derived from coaches' training, recognising its relevance and benefits for both educators and guardians. A noteworthy aspect of the project's design is its inclusive dynamic, which goes beyond traditional school settings by bringing together young participants of varying age groups. This not only enriches the learning experience but also fosters interaction and social cohesion among participants.

Consultations also affirmed the project's synergy with health interventions, with local health patrols conducting periodic awareness initiatives on various health issues, including sexual and reproductive health, drugs, and alcohol. The project has enjoyed ongoing engagement from the National Provincial Health Authorities, a partnership that extends to their active participation in the tournaments. This collaborative effort ensures consistent messaging, reinforcing the crucial lessons imparted during SKILLZ sessions. Additionally, local aid posts contribute to the project's alignment with broader health objectives by carrying out health awareness initiatives that stress key messages, such as condom use and HIV/AIDS awareness. This concerted approach demonstrates the project's integration into the larger Provincial health framework.



An unintended yet significant outcome of the project has been the strengthening of KTF's relationship with Kokoda Memorial Hospital. The collaborative efforts of the project have recently prompted the hospital to allocate a standalone space for a new Youth Friendly Health Corner. This development demonstrates the project's cohesion with local health institutions. Furthermore, the project has led to the formation of an FSV Action Committee, comprising parents of Kicks for Kokoda participants. This committee actively collaborates with government bodies, advocating for gender equality and promoting the existence of referral pathways for survivors of violence. Additionally, KTF has successfully established a valuable relationship with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), based in Port Moresby, demonstrating support for the project from regional partners. IPPFF provides condoms which are distributed at tournaments.

The evaluation also unveiled substantial community support for the project, with collaborative efforts from various entities, including aid posts, schools, and churches. Effective communication mechanisms between these entities as been highlighted as crucial to ensuring the smooth execution of Kicks for Kokoda activities, fostering collaboration among schools, teachers, and coaches. However, one instance of pushback from schools was noted, when a new administrator failed to recognise the educational significance of the Kicks for Kokoda project. Prompt intervention by KTF, involving discussions and clarifications on the curriculum's importance and alignment with educational goals, mitigated the issues and reinforced the project's coherence within the educational landscape.



Efficiency

The efficiency of the Kicks for Kokoda project has emerged as a noteworthy strength, with observable progress towards desired outcomes occurring fairly quickly, and coaches found the project resources to be user-friendly and easily implementable. While societal shifts in perceptions on topics like gender norms, equality, and sexual and reproductive health typically unfold gradually, coaches and teachers observed substantial changes in adolescent behaviour within the three years since the project's initiation, often quite rapidly throughout and immediately following the conclusion of an intervention. One coach, who is also a parent, highlighted the rapid improvements in her son's confidence, noting surprise at the speed of these positive transformations, as well as improvements in her son's resilience to trying new things, despite occasional failings. A teacher echoed these findings and also noted that a higher proportion of student participation correlated with quicker transformations in the attitudes and behaviours in the classroom.

Efficiency has been further evidenced in the materials provided to coaches, which have been praised for their accessibility and ease of use, crucial factors given the diverse and remote settings where the project operates. Coaches applauded the user-friendly nature of the materials, emphasising their helpfulness and straightforward applicability. The timely availability of these resources well in advance of their need also demonstrates the project's high operational efficiency. Despite these strengths, one coach suggested that coach training should occur biannually to further enhance their preparedness. However, it was noted that this request came from a new coach, who will be invited to a refresher training soon as they enter their second year as a coach.

Consultations also shed light on the importance of ensuring coaches' comfort in discussing sensitive subjects, such as contraceptive methods, and their capacity to explain more complex topics like the reproductive system. Coaches expressed that sessions on these subjects, including Session 7, 'Changing Body', posed some challenges in teaching and explaining to students. The Head of Health highlighted that the project made significant strides to address these challenges, including by having a Community Health Worker attend the training sessions to provide additional information on these subjects and offer coaches an opportunity to seek clarification. This suggests that any difficulties might not stem from a lack of understanding on the coaches' part but could be related to the discomfort associated with discussing these subjects due to prevailing stigma. To further overcome these challenges, KTF could explore aligning one of the Coach Support Visits, where the KTF Project Coordinator attends a weekly practice to support the coach, with this week of the intervention, especially for newer coaches. This strategic approach would enhance the coach's comfort level, and the Project Coordinator could play a pivotal role in explaining these complex topics.

The project has demonstrated commendable value for money, implementing cost-effective measures to optimise resources. Leveraging existing school facilities as training venues, free of charge, is a notable example of efficient resource utilisation. The incorporation of Youth Friendly Health Corners into pre-existing health facilities further



highlights the project's strategic and sustainable approach. The use of locally recruited coaches has contributed to minimising transportation costs, enhancing the overall cost-effectiveness of the initiative. Importantly, the resources allocated to the project are designed for long-term use and are easily reusable, providing sustained benefits without the need for continuous investment in expensive assets.

While evaluating the project's value for participants, the Head of Health acknowledged the inherent challenge of quantifying the impact of adolescents acquiring knowledge on critical topics such as disease prevention and response mechanisms for GBV or FSV. The immeasurable value lies in empowering adolescents with life-saving information and support avenues that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Coaches, too, have realised significant value for money through the knowledge gained and the enhancement of their capacity to effectively engage with adolescents, thereby contributing to the overall success of the program.



Jamielee (left) and Shaion (right) are sisters from Binandere and Garaina in Oro Province. Shaion is in Grade 7 at Kokoda Primary School and Jamielee is in Grade 9 at Kokoda High School. The two sisters joined the K4K program in 2021 and were participants of the K4K tournaments held in early April of 2022. Apart from being part of the K4K program, both sisters also play for their local football club, Mamba FC, which is affiliated with the Kokoda Sports Association.

Through the program, Shaion has realised that she is an equal, she can take control of her life and make good decisions that lead to a brighter future. She wants to be able to change the stereotypes in PNG by advocating for gender equality in her community and use her voice to talk to her peers about the importance of men and women being equal.

The recent K4K tournament in Kokoda also made it possible for the Team PNG Hero Athletes to identify Jamielee as an outstanding soccer player. Jamielee did extremely well during the tournament in Kokoda. The Team PNG athletes indicated that they can help her take part in a training development program for young talents in the country, who will one day represent PNG in the future. Jamielee is keen on what may come out of this for her soccer career and is pleased at being identified as a talented young soccer player in her local community. The two sisters are passionate about soccer and they are happy that being part of the Kicks for Kokoda project.



Sustainability

This evaluation found that the project has several elements that contribute to the sustainability of the project activities and interventions.

Coaches unanimously expressed their commitment to continuing the utilisation of provided resources, particularly the curriculum booklet which was highly valued. The equipment provided, including volleyball posts, balls, and other physical education materials, has also been identified for ongoing use, with coaches planning to integrate them into their school's PE lessons.

Crucially, the project's design fosters a community of 'game-changers,' wherein both coaches and participants become catalysts for sustained positive change and enduring role models. Coaches, almost unanimously, affirmed their dedication to maintaining their role model status in their communities. One coach stated, "I want to be a role model in my own family and venture out to the community as a coach. I learned and know what SKILLZ means to me. I want to teach other community members who do not know." Another coach said "Another coach said, "My community, Kebara, they learned a lot but still want more of [the training]. The project is just great, we will continue to use in the future. It is a game changer."

The project's influence extends beyond its immediate scope, inspiring coaches to think innovatively and initiate similar endeavours. One coach stated, "I plan to run 'pikinini sports'. It's still in discussion with a few colleagues and friends willing to assist. Aim behind this is not only playing sports but organising young people and doing awareness on good morals and principles of becoming a better person in the community and a good sports person, displaying the four values learnt from the PNGOC Hero Athletes."

Consultations revealed that there will be lasting impacts on the community even after the project concludes. Teachers reported ongoing application of learned values by participants within classrooms, reinforcing the project's enduring influence on students. Additionally, the SKILLZ program has played a pivotal role in identifying leaders within communities, a particularly significant outcome in a societal context such as PNG, where village leaders wield substantial influence. The project's long-lasting impacts are also evident in the continual pride and excitement expressed by parents, who remain enthusiastic about their children's participation in SKILLZ teams and tournaments. Furthermore, the communities have acquired valuable knowledge and skills through the project, extending their application beyond the immediate context. This impact is evident in their ability to organise and execute community events, for example in their newfound proficiency in setting up and implementing Round Robin draws for tournaments. The acquired knowledge serves as a practical resource that communities can continue to leverage in their daily lives, reinforcing the sustainable benefits generated by the Kicks for Kokoda project.

Another example of a positive shift in the sustainability of the impacts of the project is the noteworthy surge in female participation in sports, with many now engaging in broader tournaments in Popondetta and venturing into play across different provinces. This demonstrates that the project has effectively fostered a sustained interest and



active involvement among females in sports beyond the project's immediate scope, contributing to the lasting impact on the community's sporting culture.

Despite all these elements of sustainability and tangible impacts, it is noteworthy that the coaches and communities, while equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources, may be unlikely to continue delivering the SKILLZ curriculum without financial compensation. This specific aspect raises concerns about the project's full sustainability and prevents it from receiving the highest score in this criteria. To enhance sustainability and secure the ongoing delivery of the SKILLZ curriculum, it is advisable to explore opportunities to integrate the curriculum into school curricula and activities. This strategic step could provide a more structured platform for the dissemination of essential knowledge and skills imparted by the SKILLZ program.



GEDSI

The Kicks for Kokoda project inherently emphasises inclusivity for women, girls, and people with disabilities, aiming to enhance GEDSI outcomes. Despite notable success in gender inclusion, the project encountered challenges in fully addressing disability inclusion due to cultural complexities prevalent in PNG.

A robust commitment was demonstrated by the project for gender equality and inclusion, with deliberate efforts to engage women and girls. The recruitment strategy focuses on maintaining a balanced 50:50 gender split among participants and coaches, a goal consistently achieved throughout the project's duration. In-field teams actively promote the project before each intervention round, ensuring that women and girls are not only aware that the project will be taking place and the aims of the project, but also feel welcomed and encouraged to participate.

Consultations with coaches and teachers highlighted a substantial impact on fostering equality between girls and boys. Participants emerge from the sessions equipped with a clear understanding of gender equality, leading to open discussions and the sharing of thoughts on the subject. One teacher noted that girls and boys who participated in the SKILLZ intervention are communicating more with the opposite gender in classes and are also discussing their experiences and activities from the sessions whilst at school. Additionally, One teacher noted that "Girls have learned to respect themselves and are setting priorities to achieve their goals". However, it was noted minorly that much of the impact on the participants in terms of progress towards changing attitudes towards gender equality is also impacted by the parents and the environment in which the children live, further demonstrating the importance of ensuring community-wide engagement in project activities.

The project extends its influence beyond adolescent participants and has positively impacted community attitudes toward gender roles. Coaches attest to this noticeable shift. One coach stated that the project has had a significant impact and that "The community has more respect for females and allowing them to take leadership roles in the community." Other coaches echoed this statement, noting that females are also now seen as decision-makers in their communities, a tangible outcome directly attributed to the Kicks for Kokoda project.

While the project has made significant strides in promoting gender equality, coaches acknowledge the persistent challenges in the broader regional context and confirmed that attitudes are slow to change, emphasising the ongoing need for awareness campaigns targeting parents and adults in the community to facilitate sustained progress towards gender equality.

Whilst the project successfully promoted and incorporated gender equality and inclusion and met its intended outcomes in this cross-cutting area, the project faced several challenges to incorporate and meet targets for disability inclusion.



	2021	2022	2023
Number of participants with a disability	1	2	1

The project employed similar tactics to promote the project’s inclusivity, with in-field teams informing local communities of the project’s intentions. The teams spoke with health workers and teachers in the villages, who are very familiar with the population, to identify adolescents with disabilities and encourage them to participate, however, they had repeated instances where parents of adolescents with disabilities would not allow them to participate in the SKILLZ sessions. In one instance, the team visited parents and explained the inclusive nature of the project, and that despite any disability they would be able to find a role for the young person, including positions such as assistants, in administration of the teams, media and communication roles, as a spokesperson for inclusion, for example on the International Day of Persons with a Disability, or as a host alongside para-athletes during tournaments. The parents expressed their fears that their child would be unable to perform the duties, would be bullied or would find the activities discouraging.

KTF found this occurrence to be a regular outcome when attempting to engage parents of potential participants who had disabilities. KTF’s Head of Health noted that there is significant stigma of disabilities in PNG, and people with disabilities are often hidden by family members or retreat on their own accord, often dropping out of school at an early age. KTF has undertaken a comprehensive, place-based GEDSI analysis in this region, revealing parallel challenges, including parental resistance and societal stigma. These findings align seamlessly with the broader insights from KTF’s comprehensive analysis.

To address these issues, KTF implemented a number of actions such as the inclusion of a PNG Para-Olympic athlete as one of the ‘Hero Athletes’. This athlete has attended multiple tournaments and has played a very engaging role throughout these tournaments, demonstrating to the community that people with disabilities can still take part in sport, even at the highest level, as athletes or in other roles such as coaches. This Hero Athlete has encouraged the communities to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities in society and has engaged directly with the SKILLZ participants who have disabilities, which one participant found particularly encouraging and inspiring. Additionally, since the second year of the project, tournaments have strategically been held on the weekend coinciding with International Day of People with Disabilities every December, to continue to promote and champion inclusivity and raise awareness for communities.

Ultimately, coaches reported that they made significant efforts to include participants with disabilities, and believed that the project had an overall positive impact on their communities’ attitudes and beliefs towards people with disabilities. Additionally, when participants with disabilities did take part in the SKILLZ intervention, they were found to be very satisfied with the project and enjoyed participating.



Rose, a Grade 4 student with reduced function in her left side, participated in the first round of Kicks for Kokoda In Oro Province's Northern Beaches, playing for the Buna Dolphins, a group of younger participants from Buna Primary School. Despite her physical challenges, Rose actively participated as a Buna Dolphin, showcasing not only her athletic abilities but also her determination to be on par with her peers. The 'KILO' celebrations, a unique aspect of the program, held particular significance for Rose, fostering camaraderie and positivity among the participants. Beyond the soccer field, Rose engages with the program's educational components, particularly in reproductive health—a crucial aspect for adolescents.



Rose's presence challenges societal perceptions of disability, emphasizing capabilities over limitations. Her active involvement represents a catalyst for greater inclusion, inspiring others with disabilities to join and thrive in sports. This shift in perspective extends beyond personal empowerment, contributing to a more understanding and inclusive community environment, a central aim of the project.

As the inaugural Kicks for Kokoda program concluded, Rose's anticipation grew for the upcoming tournament featuring para-athletes from the PNG Olympic Committee. These role models further motivated and inspired Rose and her peers. Her journey with Kicks for Kokoda exemplifies the program's commitment to inclusivity. Her story illustrates the transformative power of inclusive sports initiatives, creating a lasting legacy of empowerment, community transformation, and personal growth.

“This program is really helping me to be in the same level as my friends. I know and believe that my future is bright.”

One facet of disability inclusion that represents an area for improvement is improved identification of other types of disabilities. To date, the project has only focused on identifying people with physical impairments, excluding other types such as vision, hearing, learning or mental impairments. It was noted that whilst the project only recorded disabilities if they were physical impairments, there were most likely many participants with other, less obvious, or undiagnosed disabilities.

KTF has had success across other projects with the implementation of the Washington Group questions. These are a set of standardised questions developed by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, an international organisation focused on improving the quality and availability of disability data. These questions are designed to



assess the functional limitations and participation restrictions experienced by individuals with disabilities. The questions cover various domains, including vision, hearing, mobility, cognition, self-care, and communication. Their purpose is to provide a comprehensive and consistent framework for identifying and understanding the diverse range of disabilities, ensuring more accurate and comparable data across different populations and contexts.

It is therefore recommended that KTF consider implementing these questions when registering SKILLZ participants. This would have a significant impact, allowing for the identification of participants with potentially undiagnosed disabilities. The Head of Health noted that schools in the region do not generally attempt to identify these impairments, therefore the project could leverage its existing close relationship with schools and teachers to provide tailored support in both a school setting as well as throughout the Kicks for Kokoda project. Additionally, KTF could leverage its other projects, such as the Healthy Communities project which provides general healthcare via Aid Posts in these villages, as well as its Sight for PNG project, which conducts vision testing and distributes glasses.

Additionally, it is recommended that the Kicks for Kokoda seek to engage with a local Disabled Persons Organisation to further identify and reduce barriers to engagement and increase participation in the project for people with disabilities.



Above, the PNG Olympic Committee, including a para-athlete, participated in the Buna tournament.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The Kicks for Kokoda project has proven a resounding success, demonstrating a high level of effectiveness and impact across its multifaceted objectives. From its inception, the project laid a robust foundation with a design intricately tailored to address not only national concerns but also the hyper-local nuances of communities in the region. By targeting critical gaps in services, especially those catering to adolescents, the project emerged as a timely and relevant intervention.

Cohesiveness marked the project's implementation, aligning seamlessly with broader community initiatives, notably in that of education and healthcare. The project's efficiency, adherence to timelines, and commendable value for money highlight its operational proficiency, as does the easily implementable intervention—vital attributes in the context of the project's unique geographical and cultural setting.

While sustainability elements are evident, particularly in lasting impacts on the community, there remains a need to reinforce the continuity of the SKILLZ curriculum, a proven and effective educational tool. Extensive data illustrates the intervention's success, showcasing notable progress, particularly in the most remote settings—an outcome indicative of the project's strategic approach and adaptability.

Promoting Gender Equality, Diversity, and Social Inclusion principles lies at the heart of the project's objectives, with commendable progress made in successfully engaging women and girls. However, further efforts to enhance inclusion for individuals with disabilities should be implemented. Leveraging operational strengths, fostering valuable relationships, and cultivating strategic partnerships, the Kicks for Kokoda project stands as a testament to effective project management and community impact.



Recommendations

- ▶ To enhance attendance rates, it is recommended that the project explores alternative session times, potentially conducting them in the mornings before school. Introducing a participatory approach by allowing each village to collectively decide on the most convenient day and time for sessions could ensure the effectiveness of this approach. Additionally, the implementation of incentives, such as providing snacks, may serve as a motivational factor, addressing potential challenges associated with hunger and subsequently reducing the likelihood of participants leaving prematurely.
- ▶ To enhance sustainability, KTF is advised to capitalise on its established relationships with schools by advocating for the integration of the SKILLZ curriculum into the regular academic schedule. Collaborating with schools to institutionalise the curriculum would contribute to the longevity of its impact. Furthermore, introducing an annual recognition program within schools could serve as a powerful motivator for maintaining positive attitude and behaviour changes. For instance, instituting awards for outstanding citizenship among project alumni and recognising current participants with the highest academic achievements could reinforce the value of the SKILLZ program and foster a culture of continual positive development within the educational setting.
- ▶ To enhance the effectiveness of the program, it is recommended that KTF strategically align one of the Coach Support Visits to correspond with challenging sessions that cover sensitive topics like the reproductive system. These sessions, often uncomfortable for newer coaches to navigate, could benefit from additional support. By synchronising the support visit with these specific sessions, KTF can provide targeted assistance, ensuring coaches receive the necessary guidance to handle complex subjects effectively. Additionally, it is recommended to ensure two Coach Support Visits are conducted during each round of the 9-week intervention.
- ▶ To enhance the monitoring of Youth-Friendly Health Corners, KTF should explore improved methods for assessing their utilisation and effectiveness in promoting access to health services among adolescents. Implementing sign-in sheets or similar tracking mechanisms could offer valuable insights into the frequency and patterns of adolescent engagement with these designated spaces. By systematically collecting data on usage, KTF can gain a clearer understanding of the impact of youth-friendly health corners and identify any areas for improvement.
- ▶ To amplify the impact of the project, KTF should persist in extending its reach to more remote locations, where the teachings have shown to be particularly impactful. The data suggests that these more isolated areas, characterised by limited educational opportunities and healthcare access, benefit significantly from the SKILLZ curriculum. By prioritising outreach to these underserved communities, KTF can continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of adolescents and contribute to positive behavioural and attitudinal changes.



- To enhance the impact of the project on the broader community, especially adults and parents, it is recommended that KTF explores additional ways to engage these groups actively during tournaments. Given the significant interest and their participation in the program, providing specific activities for adults could contribute to a more inclusive community experience. KTF may consider organising teams and games tailored for adults at tournaments or incorporating the gender equality activities from the SKILLZ Curriculum, targeted at this demographic. Introducing game cards for adults and parents, encouraging them to accumulate points by participating in various stations and information booths, with bonus points for activities like HIV testing, could serve as an effective strategy to foster their involvement. Additionally, KTF could explore synergies with its other projects, particularly those focusing on raising awareness about gender-based violence (GBV) and family and sexual violence (FSV). By strategically combining activities, KTF could create a more comprehensive and integrated approach for both projects.
- To enhance disability inclusion efforts, KTF should integrate the use of the Washington Group Set questions into the enrollment process for the SKILLZ program. This approach would facilitate the identification of individuals with non-physical disabilities, enabling coaches and teachers to offer tailored support. Furthermore, KTF should foster collaboration with a local Disabled Persons' Organisation to bolster the participation of individuals with disabilities in the program. The established strategies, such as featuring a para-Olympic athlete at tournaments and organising events on International Day of People with Disabilities, should be continued to raise awareness and promote inclusivity.