

THE CAF AFRICAN SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

A study of the Impact of the
2023/2024 African Schools Football
Championship - Zonal Phase



IMPACT OF THE AFRICAN SCHOOL FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP



74%

The majority of players at the 2023/24 African Schools Championship attended for the first time in the same year.



72%

Percentage of players who travelled internationally for the first time due to the CAF African Schools Championship.



81% v 70%

Impact was more pronounced for girls, with more reporting improved academic performance compared to the boys. This was also mirrored in the number who now play more football than before.



72%

Many players reported that their school performance improved following participation in the CAF African Schools Championship, while 65% also play more football now.

The reported improvement in academic performances highlight the importance of football participation on overall well-being of youth players and shows that football in schools does not disturb teaching activities but instead complements teaching efforts and improves learning outcomes. Hence making the case for greater investment in football infrastructure and participation in the school environment, especially for girls.

KEY TAKE AWAYS

- Youth football programmes should target girls as early as possible since. On average, girls start football 1.6 years later than boys, which impacts their development and injury risk.
- We should continue to develop community/grassroots opportunities to engage girls in football that allow girls to play football even before they start school, because boys often have more community football opportunities than girls who mainly play at school.
- Over 80% of the participants aimed for professional careers in football, posing risks of exploitation. Those in youth football should temper expectations and focus on holistic development, including physical activity, well-being, social interaction, and teamwork. This is crucial, especially considering that players prioritise friendships and travel over other aspects of tournaments.
- Parents/guardians are more likely to pay for their boy children to attend these than for their girl children. Hence, at present, football academies are more likely to benefit boys than they would girls. Therefore, investing in football infrastructure in schools, which would be free and safe for users, promises a higher return on investment for more youth football players, especially girls.
- Governments, MAs and ZUs should invest in providing resources for young girls. This is all the important as the data shows that similar numbers of girls as boys play because they consider themselves good at football and are as highly motivated as boys to become professional football players. Therefore, the youth football value chain should support this ability and desire for professionalism in girls football as well.
- Twice as many youth players have access to a coach/sports teacher than a medical professional. This presents an opportunity to leverage teachers and youth coaches' influence on their time spent with youth football players and train them in other youth development pedagogies, in order to maximise the positive impact of their interactions with youth.



Key Take Aways for CAF

- Spearhead the development of U6–U13 grassroots programmes for girls to further encourage girls' football participation.
- Keep organizing additional safeguarding workshops for our boys and girls.
- In subsequent editions, conduct studies from the National levels of the competition to gather more insights from a larger sample of youth players across the tournament.

1. INTRODUCTION

The CAF African Schools Football Championship was officially launched in April 2022 by CAF President, Dr. Patrice Motsepe with the aim of exploiting opportunities within the values of football to holistically develop African boys and girls.

In this brochure, CAF is pleased to present findings of research conducted at the Zonal Union (ZU) phase of the CAF African Schools Championship 2023/24. The study explored school boys and girls' experiences of playing football on the African continent, their knowledge of safeguarding principles, and evaluated the impact of the CAF African Schools Football Program in line with their football participation and academic performance.

Ultimately, these findings provide insights that can inform the development of interventions aimed at enhancing football participation among boys and girls in Africa.

Demographic data of the research Population

Players' average ages:
Female = 13.6y; Male = 13.7y

Variables	Features	Number	Percentages
Players	research participants	971	80%
	non-participants	249	20%
Gender	Female	480	39%
	Male	740	61%
Teams	Female	32	46%
	Male	37	54%

There were more girls participating in 2023/24 edition of the CAF African Schools Championship compared to the inaugural edition

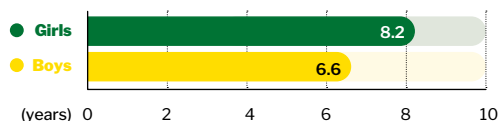


FOOTBALL EXPERIENCE

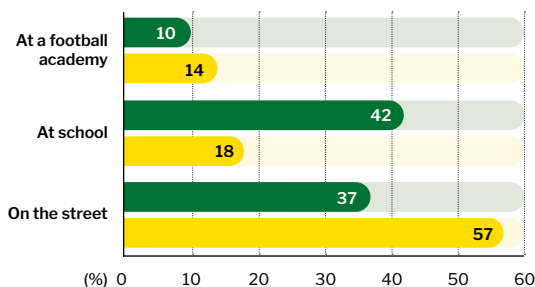
7.3 YEARS

Overall, the average age at first exposure to football for African youth football

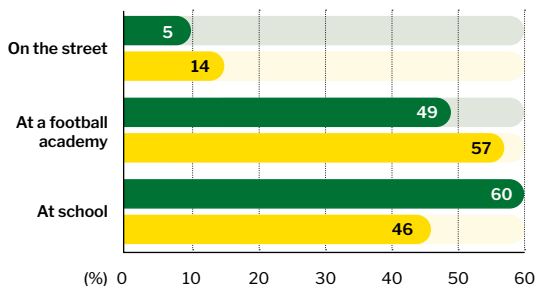
At what age (years) did you play football for the first time?



Where did you play football for the first time (girls vs boys)?



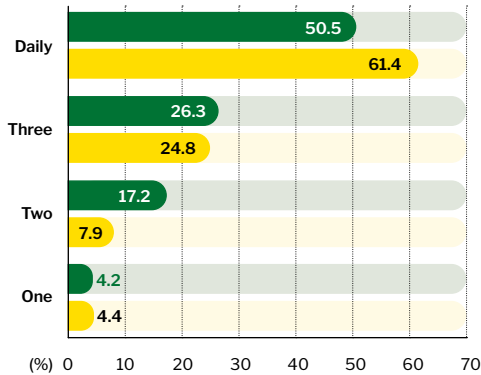
Where do you play football now (girls vs boys)?



- The later age at first exposure in girls may have implications for technical skills acquisition, psychomotor development, and injury risk.
- CAF recognises this, hence it has purposefully set the age group bracket for girls' participation in the Championship at 13 – 15 years, which is lower than the boys' bracket (14 – 15 years). Going forward, CAF is looking to create U6–U13 grassroots programmes for girls to further encourage girls' football exposure as early as possible.
- MAs should advocate for school-based opportunities to increase girls' participation in football to be initiated and prioritised as early and as often as possible in the school curriculum.
- There is a need for increased collaboration with relevant government ministries to develop community/grassroots opportunities to engage girls in football and allow them to play football even before they start school.

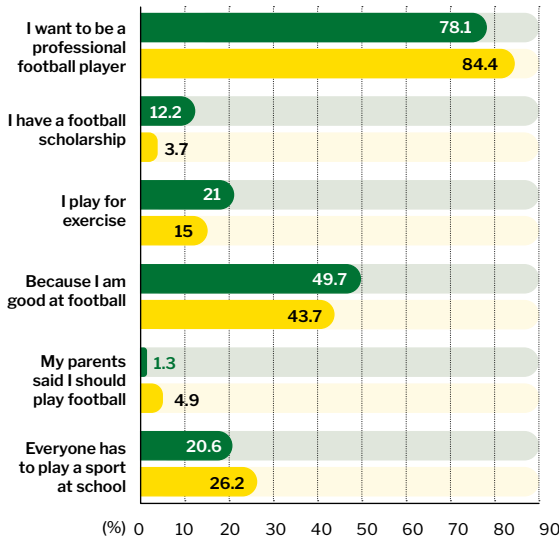
- Investing in football infrastructure in schools, which would be free and safe for users, promises a higher return on investment for increasing participation in youth football players, especially in girls.

How many days a week do you play football (girls vs boys)?



- Girls play less football than boys, this is likely because girls mainly play at school. Stakeholders should develop infrastructure, create more equitable opportunities, and provide accessible football facilities, programs, and services for girls both in and out of schools.

Why do you play football (girls vs boys)?



For participants:

21%

have separate toilets for boys and girls

56%

have football uniforms

36%

have a shared football field

66%

have footballs

69%

have football boots

54%

have goal posts at football fields

37%

have their own football field

There are no gender differences for availability of resources, with both boys and girls participants generally equally deprived.

- The focus on professional football dreams may expose youth players, particularly in Africa to exploitation and trafficking risks, with slim chances of success. Safeguarding measures and broader youth development programs beyond performance are crucial. Governments and football associations should prioritize resources for female athlete health, mentorship, accessible facilities, and scholarships to promote girls' participation in football.

#PROTECT THE DREAM

Safeguarding insights

There are currently more boys than girls.

The high levels of knowledge of athletes' rights demonstrate the success of safeguarding programs conducted at the CAF African Schools Football Championship in educating players on their rights. Future safeguarding educational programs should include material on image rights to ensure players are aware of these from an early age.

Players' feedback of the 2023/24 African schools Football Championship

While playing and improving technical football skills are vital aspects of any football tournament, players reported enjoying the social and cultural exchange emphasises the are needed for those in youth football to also focus on other aspects of football such as building relationships and travelling when developing youth football programs.



Top 5 aspects of the tournaments that the players at the 2023/24 African Schools Football Championship enjoyed

