



Sport for Education and Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa (SESLA) Video Voice Research Report

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Executive Summary

Programme background:

In response to the fact that one in four young people in Africa are not in formal education, employment, or training, Laureus Sport for Good, the International Olympic Committee, and Agence Française de Développement, alongside key African sport and social development institutions, have joined together to form the Sport for Education and Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa program (SESLA). Launched in January 2024, SESLA provides grant funding, training, peer-learning opportunities, and research support, aiming to leverage the power of sport to empower young people to create more sustainable futures for themselves and their communities.

Research approach and objectives:

To understand the depth and quality of change brought about by SESLA, Laureus commissioned InsightShare (IS) to undertake a Video Voice Research in eight selected countries, including Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Morocco, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, and Uganda. This research combined the Participatory Video and Most Significant Change (PV MSC) approaches, allowing young participants across eight countries to tell their own stories of transformation through video, capturing perspectives that traditional surveys or questionnaires often overlook.

The PV MSC process amplified young people's voices, enabling them to reflect on their journeys, identify the most significant changes in their lives, and collectively evaluate the programme's impact. It also encouraged a sense of ownership and connection amongst participants, facilitators, and partner organisations, strengthening community engagement and learning. The PV MSC process yielded a particularly valuable synergy in Kenya: hearing-impaired young people felt comfortable sharing their stories visually and the process also equipped and trained a teacher who was already tasked with creating video tests for deaf students during national examinations. As a result, the teacher is now far better skilled and resourced to conduct these critical assessments effectively in the future.

General findings:

Findings from the eight countries show that sport serves as a powerful catalyst for both individual and social change for the participating youth. Through diverse sporting disciplines such as basketball in Morocco, volleyball in Kenya, dance in Rwanda and football in Uganda, Benin the DRC, snorkelling in South Africa and skateboarding in Tunisia, **young people gained far more than athletic skills**. They developed **confidence, teamwork, discipline, leadership, and resilience**, qualities that extended beyond the playing field into their education and everyday lives. The programme also promoted **social cohesion, gender inclusion, and hope** among participants who faced economic and social barriers.

Across all participating countries, SESLA funded organisations demonstrated that integrating sport with life skills training and psychosocial development can generate profound behavioural and emotional transformation. Many participants expressed renewed **self-belief, optimism for the future, and a sense of belonging within their communities**. These changes were particularly evident in contexts where sport was combined with mentorship, education, employability training or creative expression, suggesting that a holistic approach is key to sustainable youth empowerment.

Across countries, the most consistent transformation was the restoration of confidence and self-belief. A second universal outcome was skills acquisition leading to empowerment and hope for a better future through livelihoods. A clear change sequence emerged, where hope consistently followed skills-building, highlighting that empowerment is not born from optimism alone, but from the tangible mastery of new abilities that make hope credible.

Primary Country Locations



Recommendations:

The cross-country recommendations are consistent in two main directions. For the SESLA funding partners, the focus should be on deepening integration between sport, education, and psychosocial support; investing in longitudinal research to assess long-term impacts; and facilitating regional exchanges that promote cultural learning and gender inclusion. Supporting participatory approaches like PV MSC, which promote accountability, community ownership, and adaptive learning across projects is also recommended, as all grantees reflected on how meaningful the process had been. Building on the positive results from a majority of countries, securing sustained funding for the country-level grantee organisations is now an essential next step.

For the local implementing partners, the recommendations emphasised sustainability and potential for expansion. Partners were encouraged to regularly screen the participatory videos in schools and community centres to inspire reflection and learning; to hold internal review meetings to align project theory with lived realities; and to expand projects reach to new communities, prioritising girls and marginalised groups. Continuous training for teacher-coaches and the inclusion of families in project activities were highlighted as critical for maintaining impact beyond the life of the programme.

Conclusion:

The SESLA funded organisations demonstrated that sport, when purposefully designed and contextually adapted, can transform lives and communities. Its success lies in combining structured physical activity with creativity, reflection, and participation, enabling young people not only to play but to find purpose, resilience, and belonging. Those are essential for young people to continue their education and be better prepared for adult life. The lessons from SESLA provide a strong foundation for future programming, offering a scalable and replicable approach to sports for development that can continue to strengthen young people's opportunities in education and employment, as well as their communities across the continent.

You can access all the videos created by young people here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLr4Zjc7sz5uXZhDJ5lk2dZuQNwOn5IVAt>



Storyboarding In Rwanda

01 Introduction

1.1 Background - Sports for Education and Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa (SESLA)

The Sports for Education and Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa (SESLA) is a pan-African programme that harnesses the power of sport to enhance education and employability among vulnerable young people across the continent. Funded by the *Agence Française de Développement (AFD)*, the *International Olympic Committee (IOC)* through *Olympism365*, and *Laureus Sport for Good*, the programme was launched in January 2024 to promote sustainable futures for Africa's youth through sport-based initiatives.

SESLA provides grant funding, training, peer learning opportunities, and research support to local organisations using sport as a gateway to address youth unemployment, a pressing issue in Africa, where around 25% of young people are neither employed nor in education. The programme offers both financial and technical assistance, as well as methodological guidance, to help scale and strengthen community-based projects that use sport as a tool for social and economic development.

The core objectives of SESLA are to enhance learning outcomes, particularly for children and youth with low educational attainment and in areas of high unemployment, and to improve employability through skill-building in vocational training, providing internship

opportunities, and supporting interview preparation and personal development. It also focuses on improving educational performance while fostering sustainable livelihoods through leadership development and employability skills. These interventions aim to equip young people with the tools to achieve economic independence, contribute to local economies, and build long-term career pathways.

SESLA seeks to integrate sport into broader education and employment strategies, positioning it as a key driver of economic sustainability and social progress across Africa. Through these efforts, the programme aims to create a lasting positive impact on the future of African youth and their communities.

In Africa, there are 29 SESLA funded organisations working in Benin, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia and Uganda. The following eight organizations and projects were included in this research: *Deaf Outreach Program* (Kenya), *Génération Sports X-trêmes* (Tunisia), *MindLeaps* (Rwanda), *ODDB-ONG* (Benin), *I am Water Foundation* (South Africa), *Malaika* (DRC), *United Africa* (Morocco), and *Tackle* (Uganda). Together, these organisations represent SESLA's continental reach and its commitment to empowering Africa's youth through the transformative potential of sport.

1.2 Background - Project Activities in Focus Countries

The Sport for Education and Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa (SESLA) programme is an initiative that harnesses the power of sport to promote education, empowerment, and sustainable livelihoods among young people across Africa. To evaluate the impact of its interventions, the Participatory Video and Most Significant Change (PV & MSC) methodology was used in eight countries. This participatory approach, facilitated by InsightShare and led by Soledad Muñiz as Project Manager and Josiah Mukoya as Lead Trainer, allowed participants to document and share their personal stories. Through this approach, the lived experiences of project-targeted participants were captured in ways that traditional surveys and questionnaires often cannot. In each country, young people and local staff co-facilitated this video voice research.

In Rwanda, the project was implemented by MindLeaps in Nyamirambo District, Kigali. Using dance-based physical activities combined with life skills training, the initiative focused on empowering vulnerable youth through education and livelihood development. In a context where young people face limited access to quality education, employment, and safe spaces for recreation, the Participatory Video activity enabled them to share their experiences and collectively reflect on the positive changes brought about by the SESLA-supported interventions.

In Uganda, the project was undertaken by Tackle in Hoima, Western Uganda, with a focus on football and life skills education. The initiative targeted adolescent girls in 40 schools, empowering them through sport-based learning around health, gender equality, and leadership. In an environment where girls often face early marriage, gender inequality, and restricted access

to reproductive health information, the PV MSC methodology provided a platform for them to express their voices and reflect on how participation in the programme has influenced their lives and communities and allowed them to improve their access to education.

In South Africa, the SESLA funded organisation I Am Water Foundation in Cape Town works primarily with primary schools students. The organisation promotes ocean-based environmental education and water sports like snorkelling, encouraging children to develop a sense of marine conservation and environmental stewardship. Many of these learners come from under-resourced communities with limited access to nature-based learning opportunities. Through Participatory Video, they shared stories of how the programme has changed their perspectives and inspired them to take an active role in protecting their environment.

In Benin, the project was implemented by the Organisation pour le Développement Durable et la Biodiversité (ODDB) in the lower Oueme Valley, Southern Benin. Here, the focus was on combining environmental education with sports to empower girls through learning, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable livelihoods. In communities where girls often face social and educational barriers, the PV MSC activity gave them a chance to amplify their voice and share their stories of transformation. They reflected on how the SESLA-supported initiatives have improved their confidence, engagement, and education participation.

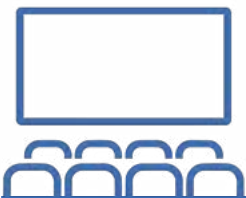
In Morocco, United Africa, formerly United Morocco, implemented the project in the Casablanca region, using basketball to promote inclusion and empowerment among children and youth. The project was set against a backdrop of socio-economic challenges

such as limited access to safe play areas and opportunities for creative self-expression. In this video voice research, participants were able to express their personal journeys and collectively assess the impact of SESLA initiatives in creating positive changes in their lives and communities.

In Tunisia, the SESLA funded organisation Génération Sports X-trêmes (GSX) implemented its project in Hammame Sousse. The programme focused on engaging children and teenagers in extreme sports such as skateboarding and recreational activities as a means of fostering empowerment, self-expression, and community participation. In a setting where young people have few structured opportunities for personal growth, the PV MSC process allowed them to share their stories and evaluate the positive transformations resulting from the SESLA-supported incubation project.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the project was implemented by Malaika in the Kalebuka community, located in Southeastern DRC. The initiative combined community sports like football with education to promote empowerment and development among youth. In a region where poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to education present major challenges, participants used the Participatory Video approach to document and evaluate significant changes in their lives, in relation to education and employability skills. Their stories highlighted the powerful role of sport in enhancing education, confidence, and social cohesion within the community.

In Kenya, Deaf Outreach Programme (DEAFOP) in Embu County, targeted deaf students in schools with life skills, digital skills, leveraging the power of sports. DEAFOP targeted deaf learners by replacing isolation with a supportive community and instilling confidence through volleyball and skills training. This holistic support fostered a profound psychological shift, turning their focus from past hardships toward ambitious futures and equipping them with the practical means and self-belief to achieve independence.



“Before the videos, I was just doing workshops with the children, not knowing the impact it had on them... after watching, I understood and appreciated everything that was happening.”

Trainee Facilitator, South Africa

Mapping the countries selected for the research and supported intervention areas

1 Morocco: United Africa, Casablanca Region

Impact Focus: Inclusion and empowerment of children and youth through sport and education.

Context: In the Casablanca region, youth face socio-economic challenges such as limited access to safe recreational spaces and opportunities for self-expression.

2 Tunisia: Génération Sports X-trêmes (GSX), Hammame Sousse

Impact Focus: Youth empowerment and community engagement through sport and education using extreme sports like skateboarding.

Context: In Hammame Sousse, young people have limited structured opportunities for personal development.

3 Uganda: Tackle – Hoima, Western Uganda

Impact Focus: Empowering adolescent girls through sport-based education on health, gender equality, and leadership using football and life skills training.

Context: Adolescent girls in Hoima face challenges such as early marriage, gender inequality, and limited access to reproductive health information that limits their access to education.

4 Kenya: Deaf Outreach Programme (DEAFOP)

Impact Focus: deaf students in schools with life skills, digital skills, leveraging the power of sports, with focus on volleyball.

Context: Isolated, deaf students who lack community support

5 Rwanda: MindLeaps – Nyamirambo District, Kigali

Impact Focus: Empowerment of vulnerable youth through education and livelihood skills using dance-based physical activity and life skills training.

Context: Young people in Nyamirambo face limited access to quality education, employment opportunities, and safe spaces for recreation.

8 Benin: (ODDB) – Lower Oueme Valley, Southern Benin

Impact Focus: Empowerment of girls through football, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable livelihoods.

Context: Many girls in the lower Oueme Valley face social and educational barriers.

7 Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Malaika –Kalebuka Community, Southeastern DRC

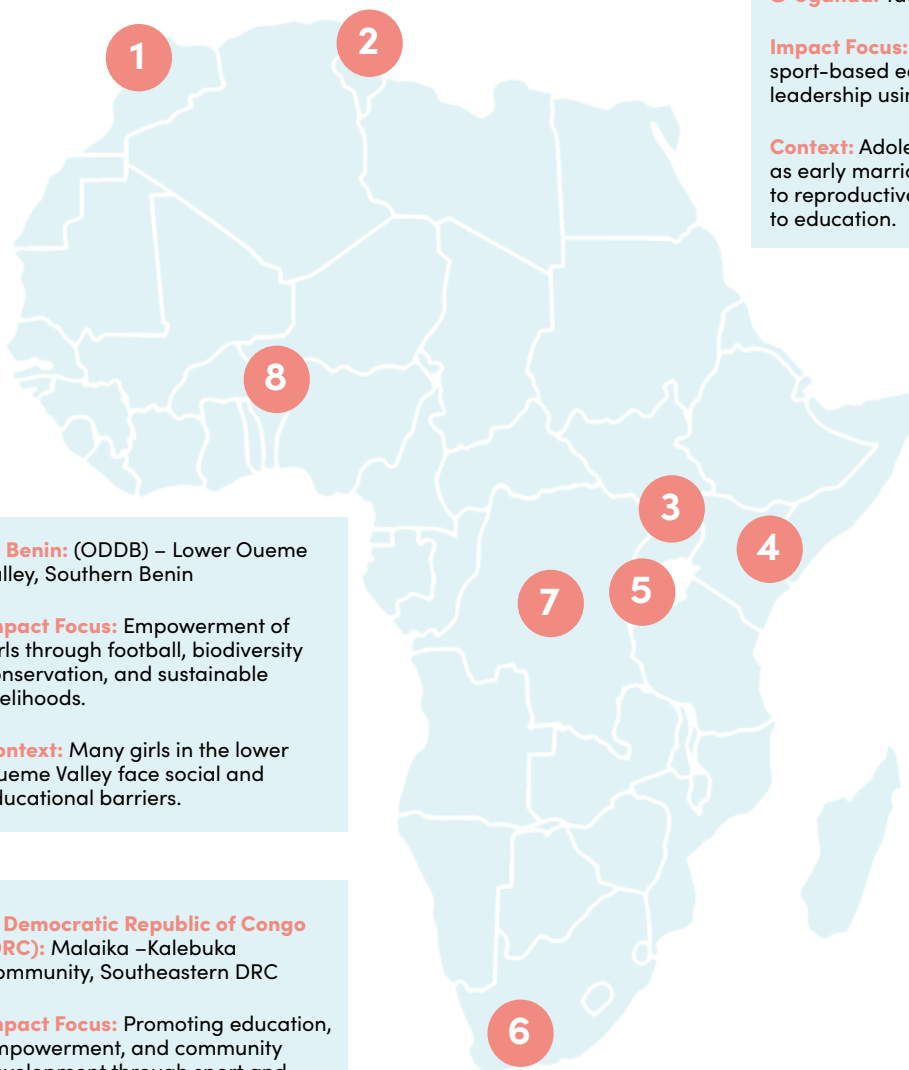
Impact Focus: Promoting education, empowerment, and community development through sport and education.

Context: In Kalebuka, youth face poverty, gender inequality, and limited educational opportunities

6 South Africa: I Am Water – Cape Town

Impact Focus: Raising marine conservation awareness and empowering youth through environmental stewardship and ocean-based activities like snorkelling.

Context: Children from under-resourced communities in Cape Town lack access to nature-based learning



02 Methodology – Video Voice Research

2.1 Participatory Video and Most Significant Change (PV MSC)

This Video Voice Research used Participatory Video and Most Significant Change (PV MSC¹) as a methodological choice as it is an innovative, people-centred approach that places storytelling directly in the hands of communities. It combines two powerful techniques, Participatory Video (PV) and the Most Significant Change (MSC) method, to capture, reflect on, and communicate real human experiences of change. Through this approach, participants become active narrators of their own stories, enabling deeper reflection, shared ownership, and a stronger connection to the outcomes of development initiatives.

Participatory Video is a grassroots process in which individuals or groups learn to create short films, document their stories and experiences, challenges, and achievements in their own voices and cultural contexts. It is an accessible and flexible medium that empowers participants to express themselves freely and creatively. Unlike conventional tools such as surveys or questionnaires, video storytelling captures emotions, context, and personal meaning, revealing the human side of change that numbers alone cannot convey.

¹ More information about PV/MSA can be found here: <https://insightshare.org/resources/participatory-video-and-the-most-significant-change>

When combined with the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique, which focuses on systematically identifying and analyzing the most significant stories of change from participants' perspectives, PV becomes a participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning tool. This combination allows communities to reflect collectively on what changes matter most to them and why. It fosters dialogue, inclusivity, and mutual understanding, creating space for both individual expression and shared interpretation of impact.

2.2 Justification for using PV MSC Approach

For the SESLA programme, the PV MSC approach has proven particularly effective because it aligns closely with the programme's people-driven and participatory ethos. SESLA aims to use sport as a pathway to enhance education, employability, and life opportunities for vulnerable youth across Africa. The PV MSC process provides a platform for these young people, whether adolescent girls in Ugandan schools, primary school students in South Africa, or youth in communities across Rwanda, Benin, Morocco, Tunisia, Kenya, and the DRC, to tell their own stories of transformation through sport.

By using PV MSC, participants could share personal experiences of how the SESLA-supported initiatives have influenced their lives, from gaining

confidence and leadership skills to improving education outcomes and fostering community cohesion. In each country, young people collectively evaluated the changes they experienced, discussed what mattered most, and highlighted the personal and social impact of sport in their lives.

PV MSC works well for SESLA because it not only documents project outcomes but also empowers the very individuals the programme seeks to support. It transforms target groups into co-researchers and storytellers, ensuring that the evidence of change emerges authentically from their own voices, facilitated and analysed by them. This youth-led, reflective process makes PV MSC a powerful tool for measuring impact, deepening learning, and amplifying the lived realities of Africa's youth as they harness sport to build more sustainable and hopeful futures.



“The plants we are producing will beautify our environment... regulate the climate and encourage rain.”

Storyteller Benin



The use of PV MSC significantly enriched programme learning in several ways:

01 Authentic, Participant-Led Insight Generation

Young people recorded and analyzed their own stories, revealing previously hidden psychosocial outcomes, including renewed hope, strengthened self-belief, transformation in self-expression, and restored resilience. The approach has a unique ability to surface intangible yet critical change dimensions.

02 Empathy-Driven Collective Learning

Screening of recorded videos in community settings led to powerful peer learning and emotional resonance. For example, both DRC and Rwanda recommended that all youth at their centres should be exposed to the recorded stories because seeing real-life narratives inspired belonging, motivation, and a sense of possibility amongst peers.

03 Improved Organizational Reflection and Strategy Alignment

In multiple countries (Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and DRC), partners recommended that staff teams review their Theory of Change (ToC) alongside PV MSC outputs. These discussions were driven by insights that staff would not have accessed through routine monitoring, suggesting the methodology served as a bridge between field reality and strategic planning.

04 Strengthened Local Capacity and Sustainability of Evaluation

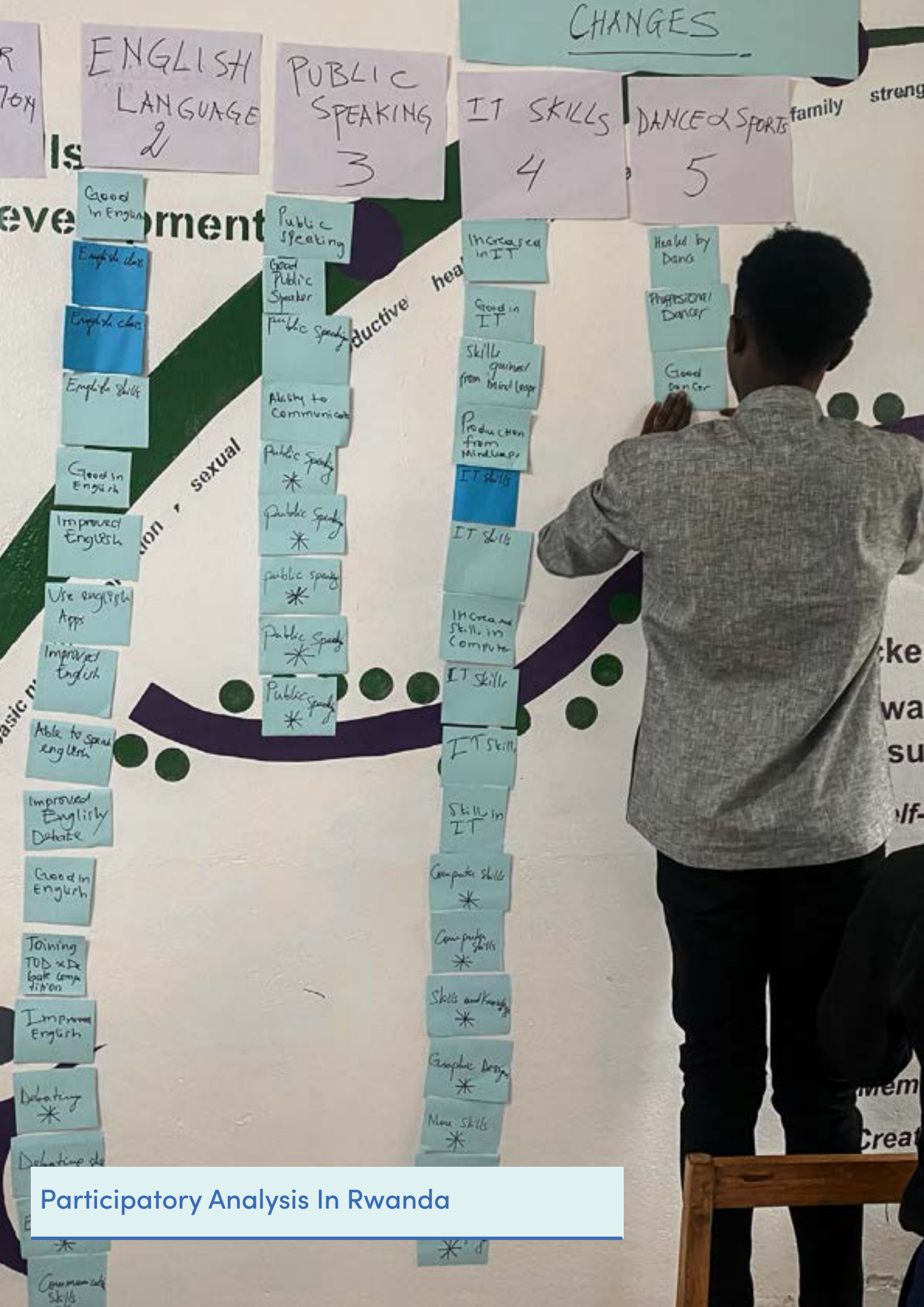
In Benin, facilitators gained sufficient confidence to potentially independently run a follow-up PV MSC process after 12 months, showing the model's sustainability and capacity-building benefits. Other countries also showed interest in replicating the methodology.

05 Revealing Areas Requiring Further Research

In Rwanda and DRC, PV MSC surfaced unexpected psychosocial outcomes, raising new research questions that traditional MEL systems had not previously identified, particularly concerning self-esteem development, gendered outcomes, and familial socio-economic resilience.

06 Revealing both foundational learning in the start-up phase and mature outcomes in implementation and closeout phases along the project life cycle management

In Benin, PV MSC occurred during the early implementation phase, resulting in less mature change stories because most project activities had not yet been fully rolled out. However, this early stage still revealed strong foundational possibilities and provided strategic direction for both learning and scale-up. The team therefore recommended a repeat process after 12 months to capture more advanced outcomes. Conversely, in contexts where project activities had progressed sufficiently (such as Rwanda and the DRC), PV MSC captured profound behavioural and psychosocial transformations, suggesting that mid-to-late phase implementation yields richer evidence of sustainable change.



CHANGES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE
2

PUBLIC SPEAKING
3

IT SKILLS
4

DANCE & SPORTS
5

Good in English

English class

English class

English skills

Good in English

Improved English

Use English apps

Improved English

Able to speak English

Improved English Debate

Good in English

Joining TOB and local competition

Improve English

Debating *

Debating skills

Communication skills

Public speaking

Good Public Speaker

Public Speaking

Ability to Communicate

Public Speaking *

Public Speaking *

Public Speaking *

Public Speaking *

Public speaking *

Increased in IT

Good in IT

Skills gained from brain loop

Production from mind maps

IT skills

IT skills

Increase skills in computer

IT skills

IT skills

Skills in IT

Computer skills *

Computer skills *

Skills and Knowledge *

Graphic Design *

New skills *

* d

Healed by Dance

Professional Dancer

Good Dancer

Participatory Analysis In Rwanda

03 Findings

3.1 Barriers across the SESLA focus Countries

Across all eight countries where the Sports for Education and Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa (SESLA) programme operates, Uganda, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Benin, South Africa, Morocco, Kenya, and Tunisia, young people faced a web of interrelated barriers before the interventions. These barriers spanned economic, social, cultural, educational, and psychological dimensions, influencing not only access to education and employment but also confidence, social inclusion, and emotional well-being. Although the manifestations differed from country to country, the underlying themes were remarkably consistent, painting a picture of structural and social disadvantage that the SESLA programme seeks to address through sport, mentorship, and inclusive community engagement.

3.1.2 Common Barriers across countries

Economic hardship: This was the most pervasive challenge across all SESLA contexts. Poverty emerged as both a direct and indirect constraint, limiting access to education, health services, recreation, and the basic necessities of life across all eight countries. In Uganda, it was noted that parents could not afford sanitary pads or menstrual cups for their daughters, leading to school absenteeism,

low confidence, and exclusion from school activities. In Benin and the DRC, lack of income forced families to prioritize survival over education, pushing children, particularly girls, into early marriages, domestic labour, or informal work. In Rwanda, poverty is intertwined with broken family structures, leaving many young people struggling to afford school fees, uniforms, or materials, and in some cases forcing them to repeat grades or drop out altogether.

Family instability and weak parental support:

This was a second cross-cutting barrier. Many young people reported growing up in fragmented and dysfunctional households. In some cases, this was linked to families affected by substance abuse, illness, conflict, polygamy or single-parent households. Such conditions deprived youth of emotional security, guidance, and role models. In the DRC, for example, several youths were raised by grandparents or step-parents who were unable or unwilling to support their education, while others suffered domestic abuse, neglect, or stigma. In Rwanda and Tunisia, emotional neglect and the absence of encouragement translated into deep-seated fear, low self-esteem, and a lack of motivation to pursue academic or social growth.

Limited access to quality education and personal development opportunities:

In Rwanda, under-resourced schools, overcrowded classrooms, and poor

teacher support contributed to poor learning outcomes. Similarly, in Uganda, school environments lacked proper support systems for menstrual hygiene and safeguarding, leaving girls unprotected and uninformed. In Tunisia and Morocco, the absence of inclusive and motivating extracurricular activities, especially in sports, led to disengagement and a sense of alienation among urban youth. Even in South Africa, young learners had little exposure to environmental education or outdoor activities, resulting in a disconnect from nature and a limited understanding of ecological sustainability.

Psychosocial barriers: These were also widespread across Uganda, Tunisia, and Rwanda. Youth commonly reported low confidence, shyness, and fear of failure. Many felt socially excluded or labelled negatively by peers due to health conditions, poverty, or disability. In Morocco and Tunisia, discouragement by teachers or coaches crushed young people's self-belief, while in Rwanda, bullying and stigma over appearance or illness isolated vulnerable children. These internalized barriers limited participation in school, sport, and social life, hindering both academic and emotional growth.

Gender inequality: This appeared in multiple forms across countries. Girls, in particular, bore the brunt of cultural taboos, reproductive health challenges, and societal expectations. Menstrual stigma in Uganda, early pregnancies in Benin, domestic exploitation in the DRC and Kenya, and limited mobility in conservative communities all reduced girls' access to education and sport. Boys, on the other hand, faced pressure to perform or conform, sometimes leading to behavioural problems, delinquency, or withdrawal when they failed to meet expectations, as seen in Tunisia and Morocco.

3.2.1 Other Barriers (not common to all countries)

1. Education and Employment Barriers

Education/skills and employment mismatch:

The intersection between education and employment barriers was particularly stark. Across the SESLA countries, educational challenges often set the foundation for limited employability. In Uganda, girls' absenteeism during menstruation and limited participation in sports meant that they missed out not only on academic learning but also on the confidence and teamwork skills that sport can instill. In Rwanda, frequent school disruptions due to poverty or family breakdowns led to repeated grades and poor academic achievement, leaving youth unprepared for the job market. Similarly, in the DRC and Benin, weak education systems, compounded by economic instability, restricted access to vocational training or career pathways.

In contexts such as Tunisia and Morocco, while schools were more available, they were often disconnected from the realities of the job market. Youth described their education as demotivating, irrelevant, and unaligned with their aspirations. Many lacked soft skills, practical training, or access to mentorship, leaving them ill-equipped to secure stable employment or pursue entrepreneurial ventures. In Morocco, for instance, even talented athletes had limited exposure to organized programmes, often depending on chance encounters or informal networks to access opportunities. Across the countries, the education–employment gap was characterized by poor quality schooling, limited vocational opportunities, and lack of confidence-building experiences, an interlocking set of challenges that SESLA's sport-based, skills-oriented approach is well-positioned to address.

2. Rural and Urban Differences

Rural vs. Urban Exposure and

Infrastructure: The rural-urban divide significantly shaped the nature and intensity of the barriers young people face. In rural areas, such as Hoima (Uganda), Kalebuka (DRC), and Oueme (Benin), poverty was compounded by cultural conservatism and weak infrastructure. Schools were often under-equipped, teachers poorly trained, and extracurricular activities non-existent. Girls in rural areas faced particular vulnerability due to early marriages, domestic responsibilities, and lack of access to menstrual health products or reproductive education. Sport and recreation were often considered inappropriate for girls, reinforcing social isolation and dependency.

In contrast, urban youth, such as those in Nyamirambo (Rwanda), Sousse (Tunisia), or Casablanca (Morocco), experienced different but equally limiting challenges. They had better access to education and sport but faced intense social pressure, peer competition, and exposure to negative influences like bullying or crime. The anonymity of city life often meant weaker community cohesion and limited emotional support. In Tunisia and Morocco, for example, urban youth struggled with mental health issues stemming from discouragement, failed academic expectations, and a lack of safe community spaces. Meanwhile, in South Africa, even within urban schools, disparities persisted where children from low-income families were excluded from activities like water-based sports or environmental learning due to cost and cultural unfamiliarity.

While rural youth were hindered by material deprivation and conservative norms, urban youth grappled with emotional disconnection, systemic pressure, and lack of belonging; both contexts point to different but equally urgent needs for holistic interventions.

3. Gender and Inclusion

Gender-based stigma: Gender dynamics cut across all layers of barriers, shaping access to education, sport, and self-expression. In Uganda, gender-based stigma around menstruation excluded girls from school and sport participation, undermining their self-esteem and academic progress. In Benin, early pregnancies, polygamy, and domestic labour trapped many girls in cycles of poverty and dependency. Similarly, in the DRC, patriarchal attitudes and family instability subjected girls to neglect, exploitation, or early motherhood, limiting their agency and future prospects.

Boys, on the other hand, faced different forms of pressure. In Tunisia, several male participants described deep-seated fear of failure and lack of direction, often linked to societal expectations of strength and success. In Morocco, boys experienced discouragement from unsupportive coaches or teachers, leading to frustration and disengagement from sport or education. Across all contexts, the absence of positive male role models, especially in single-parent households, left boys vulnerable to delinquency or social withdrawal.

The gender analysis thus reveals that while girls faced structural and cultural barriers, boys struggled more with psychological and identity-based challenges. Within the eight countries we visited, we noticed the inclusive and gender responsive model, particularly in some cases through team-based sports and mentorship, that has been instrumental in bridging this divide, offering safe, empowering spaces for both girls and boys to rebuild confidence and self-worth. In Kenya, learners with hearing impairment expressed their concerns about having to navigate stereotypes related to their disabilities within the community.

3.2 What enables Change

Across the SESLA programme countries, young people's stories revealed a range of enabling factors, "what made change possible", that supported their personal, educational, and social transformation. Although these enablers varied across contexts, they shared common threads of mentorship, community support, accessible learning environments, and sport-based engagement that combined to unlock potential and inspire sustained growth.



Snorkling In South Africa

3.2.1 Common Enablers across projects

A striking commonality across all SESLA interventions is the **power of safe, supportive environments that encourage participation and learning**. Whether through football fields, skateparks, literacy centres, or ocean-based classrooms, each initiative created inclusive spaces where young people could explore their abilities without fear or judgement. These environments became hubs of belonging and empowerment, helping participants build confidence, develop life skills, and rediscover hope.

Mentorship and coaching also emerged as a shared enabler. In Uganda, trained football coaches guided adolescent girls through sessions on menstrual health and hygiene, equipping them with both practical knowledge and self-confidence. Similarly, in Morocco, dedicated mentors like Coaches Hayat and Reda not only taught basketball but also rebuilt self-esteem and shaped young lives through consistent guidance and emotional support. Across the continent, coaches, teachers, and volunteers acted as trusted figures, bridging information gaps, reinforcing values, and helping youth navigate challenges.

Another recurring enabler was **education and skills development**. Whether through formal schooling or non-traditional learning spaces, SESLA projects recognized that access to learning is central to empowerment. In Rwanda, MindLeaps integrated academic and IT training into their dance and debate programmes, preparing youth for future employment. In the DRC, Malaika combined sports, literacy, vocational, and artistic training to nurture both cognitive and practical skills. Similarly, in Benin and Tunisia, sports were blended with classroom learning and environmental or creative education, helping youth connect physical activity to intellectual and emotional growth.

Community and peer support was a unifying thread. Many young participants found strength in networks of friends, family, and community members who encouraged participation and celebrated achievements. From the “United family” in Morocco to the peer-learning culture at Tunisia’s GSX Skatepark, these collective networks fostered a sense of belonging and mutual encouragement that amplified individual change.

Sports was key anchor across all SESLA partners. Sports functioned as both a tool and a metaphor for empowerment, a medium through which education, self-confidence, and community connection could be achieved. Each project localised this concept based on its context: Uganda emphasised health and dignity, Rwanda focused on expression, confidence and employability skills, Kenya expanded support and inclusion of the deaf student community, South Africa on environment and mindfulness, Morocco on mentorship and belonging, Tunisia on creativity and resilience, the DRC on education and livelihoods, and Benin on the balance between learning and nature.



“We gained a new family—the united family.”

Participant,
Morocco

3.2.2 Country-specific key enablers or drivers of change

In **Morocco**, mentorship, structured coaching, and a sense of community underpinned the stories of change. The United Africa programme's emphasis on consistent training sessions, goal setting, and peer celebration fostered discipline and motivation among youth. Family encouragement and community connections, such as neighbors and principals introducing participants to the programme, played an instrumental role in opening opportunities and sustaining engagement.

Sports integration within schools in **Benin** acted as the main enabler of change. Football drew girls into structured, positive environments that promoted teamwork, discipline, and emotional resilience. The project's linkage of sports with education encouraged school retention, while tree planting and environmental lessons introduced learners to sustainability and stewardship, merging physical development with ecological awareness.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, Malaika's success was rooted in comprehensive empowerment through sports, education, creativity, and vocational training. Literacy programmes, IT and mechanics training, alongside sports activities, addressed both intellectual and practical needs. By offering diverse pathways, academic, artistic, and athletic, the programme enabled young people to discover and develop their individual talents, preparing them for employment and entrepreneurship.

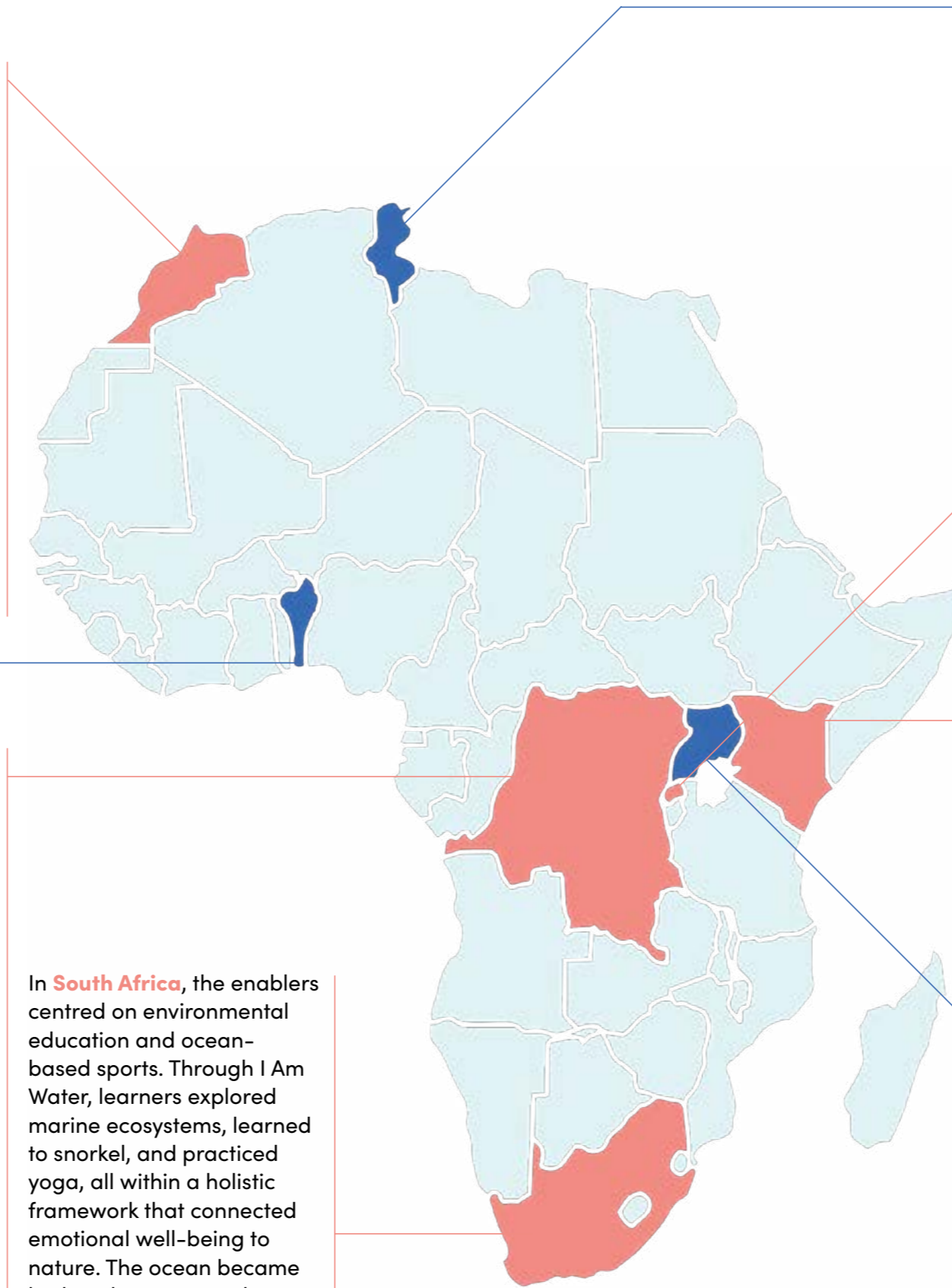
In **South Africa**, the enablers centred on environmental education and ocean-based sports. Through I Am Water, learners explored marine ecosystems, learned to snorkel, and practiced yoga, all within a holistic framework that connected emotional well-being to nature. The ocean became both a classroom and a sanctuary, supported by schools, teachers, and families that reinforced environmental stewardship and self-discovery.

In **Rwanda**, MindLeaps used debate, dance, and skills training to nurture confidence, social inclusion, and academic aspiration. The safe community setting allowed young people to overcome isolation and build communication skills, while opportunities to engage in competitions and IT courses expanded their educational and career horizons. This multifaceted approach transformed participants' self-perceptions and fostered lasting motivation.

In **Tunisia**, transformation was made possible by the GSX Skatepark and its Education Hub. The skatepark served as a physical and social anchor to learn skateboarding, a space of safety, self-expression, and camaraderie, while the hub offered workshops in languages, arts, and digital skills. Together, they cultivated confidence, social awareness, and resilience. The culture of encouragement and constructive competition fostered perseverance, teaching youth that failure is a steppingstone towards growth.

In **Uganda**, the most prominent enabler was football-based education on menstrual health and hygiene, which directly addressed one of the key barriers to girls' school attendance and self-esteem. The integration of sports into menstrual hygiene training and the provision of reusable pads empowered adolescent girls to manage their health with confidence. Safeguarding training and issue-reporting mechanisms further strengthened their sense of agency and safety within school environments.

The transformation of deaf learners in **Kenya** was enabled by several key factors, beginning with access to specialised schools where Kenyan Sign Language provided the foundation for understanding and communication. This was powerfully reinforced by the discovery of a supportive Deaf community, which replaced isolation with a sense of belonging. Critical development was further driven by practical vocational training that built tangible skills for independence, and by volleyball and leadership opportunities that fostered confidence and self-esteem. This holistic growth was underpinned by dedicated teachers and the catalytic support of DEAFOP, which provided essential resources.



3.3 Understanding Change

3.3.1 Common changes and impact identified across countries

Across the SESLA implementing countries, participants' stories revealed a shared journey of transformation marked by **increased confidence, new skills, stronger community bonds, and restored hope for the future**. Whether through football, dance, ocean education, skateboarding, or literacy programs, young people gained not only technical skills but also a profound shift in how they saw themselves and their place in society, including their future.

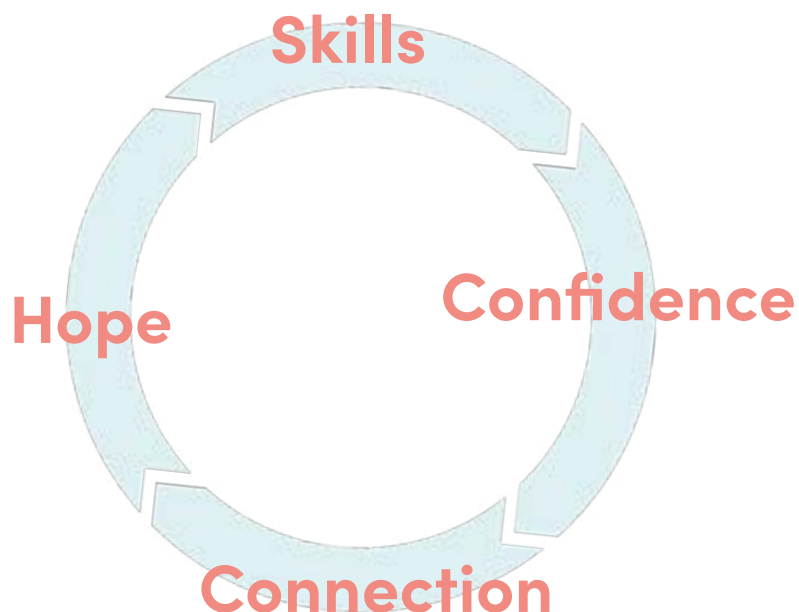
Across contexts, the most consistent transformation was the **restoration of confidence and self-belief**. Participants in Tunisia, Morocco, Rwanda, and Uganda repeatedly described moving from fear, shyness, or discouragement to self-assurance and courage. In Tunisia, "I learned to be confident and loved by everyone. I stopped being afraid," said Ons, capturing a sentiment echoed across countries. Similarly, in Morocco, a

participant reflected on finding purpose through basketball: "We gained a new family – the United family."

A second universal outcome was **skills acquisition leading to empowerment and hope for a better future through livelihoods**. In the DRC, young people learned literacy, vocational, and IT skills that made them more competitive in the labour market, while in Uganda, girls mastered both football and menstrual health management. In Rwanda, dance and debate built communication and leadership skills, and in Benin, students combined football with environmental knowledge and practical income-generating skills through agroforestry and seedling sales. These changes collectively represent a shift from dependency to self-reliance, where learning opened tangible and emotional pathways to a better life.

Common themes and Change sequence across the SESLA projects were observed. The progression of change followed a clear emotional and developmental sequence as shown in the diagram below.

Common themes and sequence noted in the Change domain



Initially, participants acquired practical or academic skills through sport-based or creative learning. This foundation of competence-built confidence, often marking a visible change in posture, speech, and social interaction. As one Ugandan girl shared, “Through football, I have been able to learn good menstrual hygiene practices and also received products that I use to keep myself clean.” From competence and confidence emerged connection to peers, mentors, and communities. In Morocco and Tunisia, this sense of belonging evolved into what many called a “second family.” This combination culminated in hope and aspiration, a stage where participants began envisioning meaningful futures for themselves. In Rwanda, several youth now aspire to careers in teaching, IT, and performing arts, while Tunisian skaters dream of “travelling the world and becoming professionals.”

This change sequence, where hope consistently follows skills-building, highlights that empowerment is not born from optimism alone, but from the tangible mastery of new abilities that make hope credible. SESLA’s methodology thus effectively combined emotional and technical growth into a single, reinforcing cycle.

3.3.2 Deeper insights across key axes

Maturity of the Sport for Education and Employability Model in each Country

SESLA’s sport-based education model varied in maturity across contexts but demonstrated deep local adaptability. In **Morocco**, United Africa relied heavily on basketball as the central anchor activity, using it to instill discipline, teamwork, leadership, and personal goal-setting. This strategy, visible in the adolescents’ stories, demonstrated an emerging but promising methodology where sport provides an entry point to life-skills development, community engagement,

and cross-cultural exposure. The recommendations highlight that while basketball training is well established, the organisation is still working to strengthen the integration of psychosocial and leadership development, pointing to a maturing but not yet fully optimized model.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, Malaika implemented a place-based and deeply community-rooted approach centred on sports and skills training. The youth stories showed significant behavioural shifts, including renewed hope and strengthened self-belief among youth facing chronic socio-economic hardship. This suggests a methodology that effectively links creative expression, physical activity, and emotional resilience. However, the inability to directly trace improvements in family circumstances to specific project components indicates that while the model is impactful, further methodological refinement and research are needed to establish clear causal pathways.

In **South Africa**, I AM Water employed a school-based, environmentally grounded approach, using experiential learning and reflective practice to support children’s emotional well-being and confidence. The strategy emphasized ocean exposure, connection, and community visibility, which became evident in recommendations calling for wider screenings and public engagement. The alignment between the project model and the behavioural changes captured in the stories suggests a well-established methodology that successfully integrates educational content, personal development, and community outreach. Young people and families have asked for an expansion of the programme reach.

In **Benin**, ODDB focused on football as the anchor activity, using it to enhance teamwork, self-esteem, and motivation among adolescent girls, particularly at

risk of dropping out of education. The stories reflected how football created a safe and empowering environment for girls navigating complex social challenges, including high rates of family instability. The recommendations, such as investing in football kits, strengthening teacher-coach capacity, and sequencing psychosocial activities, indicate a methodology that is contextually relevant and partially developed but still growing towards fuller integration of sport with mental health and family-centred support.

In **Uganda**, Tackle applied a football-centred strategy to reach adolescent girls with critical menstrual health and hygiene information. The youth stories illustrated how football fostered inclusion, confidence, and peer support, making it a strong base for delivering sensitive educational content. The emphasis on engaging parents, police, para-social workers, and teachers highlights a model that understands the importance of community ecosystems. Recommendations for strengthening internal reflection processes and expanding stakeholder involvement signal an approach with solid foundations but further room for strategic consolidation.

In **Rwanda**, MindLeaps demonstrated a well-recognised and innovative use of dance as both sport and artistic expression. The stories and analysis showed that dance served as the programme's strongest anchor activity, enabling high levels of engagement, discipline, and personal transformation. The emergence of increased self-esteem and renewed hope, despite the absence of dedicated psychosocial components, reveals a methodology with advanced maturity, where structured movement and participatory engagement consistently generate measurable behavioural gains. Their suggestion to institutionalize PV MSC within each cohort cycle further strengthens this organizational practice.

In **Tunisia**, GSX employed skateboarding as the central activity, supported by education and skills training. Youth stories highlighted how skateboarding strengthened identity, confidence, and aspiration amongst at-risk youth. The recommendations to establish inter-city tournaments, provide more sports equipment, and maintain a full-time youth manager reflect a dynamic but still formalizing methodology. While the approach clearly enables meaningful youth engagement and empowerment, sustaining its long-term structure will require further investment and operational support.

The progression of outcomes across these contexts indicates that the more mature and integrated the model, the more multi-dimensional the resulting impact.

Urban vs. Rural dynamics

Urban-based interventions (Rwanda, Morocco, Tunisia, South Africa) tended to emphasize social confidence, community belonging, and career aspirations, often within already connected environments. Rural or peri-urban projects (Uganda, Kenya, Benin, DRC) placed a stronger focus on basic education, livelihood resilience, and access to resources, often addressing structural barriers like poverty, discrimination or limited infrastructure. For instance, Benin's football and tree-planting activities not only taught teamwork but also introduced income-generating agroforestry, offering economic hope in rural areas. In contrast, urban participants in Tunisia and Morocco pursued dreams of global mobility and creative careers, reflecting how geography shaped both the scale and nature of aspirations.

Gender and Inclusion

Gender transformation emerged most vividly in Uganda and Benin, where projects directly empowered girls to reclaim agency over their education and health. The menstrual hygiene and safeguarding training in Uganda, coupled with football participation, dismantled taboos and built leadership amongst adolescent girls: “We also need them so that other learners can watch... All learners should join Tackle activities,” noted one headteacher, highlighting this with enthusiasm. In contrast, Tunisia’s and Morocco’s co-ed sport projects fostered gender coexistence and mutual respect, while in DRC and Rwanda, gender inclusion came through equal access to literacy, IT, and creative activities. Across all cases, young women’s narratives reflect both personal and cultural transformation, showing that gender-sensitive sport approaches can be powerful vehicles for broader social change. The targeted learners with hearing impairment in Kenya found that the programme allowed them to experience how to handle pressure, strive for excellence, and see themselves as capable competitors and leaders in an inclusive way, just like learners in other schools.

National and economic context

Each country’s socio-economic and political context shaped how the impact unfolded. In Uganda and Benin, where poverty and limited access to health resources persist, SESLA-funded interventions filled critical educational and well-being gaps. In DRC, where youth face instability and unemployment, Malaika’s integrated approach offered both stability and hope, turning vulnerable youth into entrepreneurs and community leaders. In Rwanda, amidst national progress in youth development and education, SESLA reinforced confidence and employability among urban youth. In Tunisia and Morocco, where youth unemployment remains high despite economic potential, organisations like GSX and United Africa gave direction and discipline, transforming idle time into purpose. Meanwhile, South Africa’s environmental initiative aligned with global sustainability goals, using ocean education to shift learners’ values toward conservation and responsibility, expanding their education.



Training In Rwanda



Story Circle In Morocco

Table 1. Mapping of change pathways utilizing data collected across key Blockers, Enablers, and Changes domains

| Country | Description | Challenges | | | | | | | | | Enablers | | | | | | | Changes | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------------|--------------------|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|--|--|---|---|------------------------|-------------|------------|------|------|
| | Causal Path | 01 | 02 | 03 | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 | 08 | 09 | 01 | 02 | 03 | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 | 01 | 02 | 03 | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 | 08 | 09 |
| DRC | Issue | Lack of Income/Poverty entry point | Sickness | Suffering | Parents divorce | Lack of education | | | | | Family support | Means to life | School | Malaka support | Friends | Knowledge | | Vision & Hope | Resilience Youth | Skills | Diploma | Love for sport | Employment | | | |
| | Frequency/Mentions | 22 | 14 | 103 | 9 | 24 | | | | | 52 | 25 | 34 | 17 | 9 | 50 | | 24 | 27 | 54 | 9 | 10 | 19 | | | |
| Rwanda | Issue | Family Hardships | Health Issues/Sickness | Personal Issues | Education Challenges | Lack of Skills | Lack of Self Esteem | | | | MindLeaps | Sport & Drama | School | English & Debate | IT Skills | Resilience | Opportunities & other support | Better Education | English Language | Public Speaking | IT Skills | Dance & Sport | Self esteem | Networking | Hope | Jobs |
| | Frequency/Mentions | 25 | 7 | 12 | 18 | 8 | 20 | | | | 25 | 11 | 7 | 17 | 4 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 18 | 10 | 16 | 10 | 34 | 13 | 31 | 5 |
| Uganda | Issue | No knowledge on menstrual Health Hygiene | No knowledge on Safeguarding | Low self esteem due to menstrual stigma | School absenteeism | No opportunity for girls to play football | | | | | Use of trained coaches | Football coaching | Menstrual Health & Hygiene management education | Safeguarding principles | Access to menstrual products | | | Gained football skills & opportunity to play | Gained skills & knowledge in menstrual health & hygiene management | Better self awareness, bold & confident | Students empowered to transfer skills to others | | | | | |
| | Frequency/Mentions | 44 | 12 | 32 | 8 | 10 | | | | | 13 | 17 | 28 | 17 | 11 | | | 2 | 30 | 21 | 7 | | | | | |
| Kenya | Issue | Poverty | Family Challenges | Gender Based Violence (GBV) | Religious Beliefs & Culture | Health Challenges | Communication / Hearing Challenge | Mental Health/Isolation | Child Labour | Education | Family Support | Health & Nutrition | Religious intervention | Schooling | Friendships | DEAFOP | Sports | Better interest in Sports | Improved Mental Wellbeing | Improved Knowledge & Skills | Better Livelihoods | | | | | |
| | Frequency/Mentions | 17 | 19 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 26 | 31 | 15 | 3 | 35 | 10 | 5 | 47 | 12 | 19 | 26 | 11 | 27 | 13 | 20 | | | | | |
| Benin | Issue | Polygamy | Family Problems | Separated family | Child labour | Poor attitude & performance at school | Pregnancy | Sickness | Death | | ODDB Project | School | Football coaches sport | Paying Football | Plants Training | | | Acquired knowledge in tree planting | Environment protection | Increased Income | | | | | | |
| | Frequency/Mentions | 15 | 17 | 8 | 4 | 18 | 8 | 7 | 6 | | 20 | 10 | 13 | 24 | 28 | | | 9 | 14 | 6 | | | | | | |
| South Africa | Issue | Family Challenges | Friends Influence | Lack of knowledge/experience in water | Fear/fear of nature | Disconnection with nature | | | | | Family & friends | School | Environmental education/club | I am water | Coach support | Mindfulness | Water activities/swimming | Connection to water | Environmental education/knowledge | Positive emotion to nature | Positive attitude | Connection with nature | | | | |
| | Frequency/Mentions | 8 | 18 | 7 | 37 | 16 | | | | | 21 | 9 | 12 | 27 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 25 | 11 | 20 | 28 | 13 | | | | |
| Morocco | Issue | Challenges to achieve | Suffering from different things | Not convinced by sport/activity | | | | | | | Help | Support | | | | | | Dream | Motivation | Change | Learnings | | | | | |
| | Frequency/Mentions | 4 | 2 | 3 | | | | | | | 6 | 8 | | | | | | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | | | | | |
| Tunisia | Issue | Family Issues | Lack of confidence | Lack of knowledge | Sickness | | | | | | Family Support | School | Education | | Sports | | | New Skill | Feelings | Friends | Hope/Dreams | | | | | |
| | Frequency/Mentions | 16 | 17 | 6 | 4 | | | | | | 15 | 28 | 12 | 11 | 45 | | | 21 | 27 | 8 | 50 | | | | | |

04 Recommendations

The recommendations emerging from this Video Voice Research across the eight SESLA countries visited collectively provide strategic insights for both the international partners and the national implementing grantees. These recommendations underscore the need to deepen community engagement, scale successful interventions, integrate sports and psychosocial development, and institutionalize reflective learning practices for sustained impact.

4.1 Recommendations for SESLA funding partners

Across all countries, a recurring theme is the call for **continuity, expansion, and scaling of the SESLA initiative**. Stakeholders across sites, ranging from teachers and facilitators to parents and youth, emphasized the transformative potential of sports-based programmes in fostering social inclusion, self-esteem, and hope amongst children and adolescents. This underscores the importance of sustained investment and expanded reach to more schools, communities, and vulnerable populations.

Moreover, the findings highlight the **critical role of sports as a vehicle for psychosocial growth**. In Morocco, Rwanda, and Benin, sports like basketball, dance, and football emerged as anchor activities not only for physical development but also for building leadership, teamwork, and

emotional resilience. This indicates a need for the SESLA global partners to further integrate life skills and mental wellbeing components into sports-based interventions design. Future programme iterations could benefit from targeted capacity-strengthening for coaches and mentors to balance athletic training with psychosocial learning outcomes.

The findings also point to valuable **research opportunities for SESLA partners** to explore deeper social and behavioural impacts of sports interventions. Particularly in Rwanda and the DRC, evidence of improved self-esteem, renewed hope, and behavioural transformation amongst youth calls for systematic studies on the measurable effects of sports and dance programmes. Such research could provide further evidence to refine theories of change models and guide adaptive programming.

Cross-country patterns reveal that **youth narratives consistently emphasise hope, dreams, and empowerment**, suggesting that SESLA's approach effectively nurtures intrinsic motivation amongst young participants. However, sustaining and amplifying this change will require structured support systems, including mentorship programmes, youth-led initiatives, and deeper linkages with education and employment pathways.

The recommendations from Tunisia highlight the need for **strategic investment in human resources and infrastructure**. The success of skateboarding as a youth development tool developed by GSX demonstrates how context-specific sports can effectively engage at-risk youth. SESLA's future support should therefore focus on strengthening local institutional capacity through dedicated staff roles, equipment provision, and expansion of intercity and cross-border sporting exchanges to foster social cohesion and career growth for talented youth.

4.2 Recommendations for SESLA funded organisations

At the local implementation level, the recommendations emphasize **enhanced community participation, programme reflection, and sustainability planning**. Partners, Tackle (Uganda), MindLeaps (Rwanda), Malaika (DRC), ODDB (Benin), I Am Water (South Africa), GSX (Tunisia), and United Africa (Morocco) are encouraged to embed the PV MSC process we used collectively in this Video Voice Research into their routine MEL project cycles. Regular exercises at the end of each cohort would enable continuous learning, documentation of qualitative outcomes, and adaptive management based on participant feedback.

A strong emphasis is also placed on **story-sharing and dissemination**. In nearly every country, stakeholders recommended public screenings of recorded videos across schools, youth centres, and community spaces. This strategy not only enhances visibility and ownership of project outcomes but also reinforces peer learning and collective pride amongst young people. For instance, Uganda and South Africa recommended screening videos in all participating schools, while DRC and Rwanda proposed similar viewings at community centres.

Furthermore, several partners were advised to **broaden stakeholder involvement**. Uganda's recommendations, for example, urged deeper engagement of parents, teachers, and male community members—particularly around sensitive issues such as menstrual health and hygiene. Such inclusive approaches could strengthen local support systems for adolescent girls, enhancing both participation and sustainability. Similarly, Benin's insights point to the need for family-focused and community advocacy initiatives to address psychosocial and structural barriers affecting learners, such as economic hardship and family instability.

The role of sports as an **anchor for holistic development** was repeatedly reinforced. In Benin and Uganda, football was recognised as a catalyst for social inclusion and behavioural change, while in Morocco and Rwanda, basketball and dance respectively fostered leadership, confidence, and emotional well-being. Partners were encouraged to deepen their support for teacher-coaches and facilitators through targeted training to sustain the quality and impact of these anchor activities.

In addition, local partners were encouraged to **leverage and optimize existing resources**. For example, Morocco's recommendation to use government-sponsored youth centres like Dar Chabab Sidi Moumen for wider screenings illustrates a cost-effective way to expand reach. Tunisia's emphasis on utilizing established sports facilities and supporting local staff positions further reinforces this point.

Lastly, the recommendations highlight the importance of **ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and reflection**. Several partners, particularly in Kenya, Rwanda, DRC, and Benin, were advised to align their theories of change with the insights derived from the PV MSC processes. This reflective practice will help bridge the gap between programme design and on-the-ground realities, ensuring interventions remain responsive to participants' evolving needs.



**“Through football,
I have been
able to learn
good menstrual
hygiene practices
and also received
products that I
use to keep myself
clean.”**

Stella, Learner,
Uganda

05 Conclusion

The SESLA programme has demonstrated the powerful role that sport, when strategically integrated with life skills and psychosocial development, can play in transforming the lives of young people across diverse Panafrikan contexts. Through its implementation in eight countries, Uganda, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Benin, Morocco, Tunisia, Kenya and South Africa, the programme has not only promoted physical well-being and teamwork but also nurtured confidence, leadership, and hope among children and youth facing economic and social adversity, providing them opportunities to remain in education and improve their livelihood skills.

The methodological approach of this research, using PV MSC, has been particularly instrumental in uncovering the depth of this impact. By placing storytelling directly in the hands of the participants, the approach empowered young people to voice their lived experiences and reflect on the transformations brought about by SESLA-funded activities. Unlike conventional evaluation tools, PV MSC captures the emotional and personal dimensions of change, revealing shifts in self-esteem, aspirations, and social inclusion that often remain invisible in quantitative assessments. It enabled participants, facilitators, and community members to co-own the learning process through participatory analysis, fostering a culture of dialogue, accountability, and shared growth. Other interesting conclusions that the research support are presented below:

Across countries, sports emerged as more than just a recreational activity, it became a **catalyst for holistic development**. In Morocco, basketball provided a platform for teamwork, discipline, and leadership; in Rwanda, dance became a conduit for self-expression, emotional healing, and community connection; in Benin and Uganda, football offered adolescent girls both physical empowerment and a safe space to discuss sensitive issues like menstrual health and early pregnancy; and in Tunisia, skateboarding created an alternative pathway for engagement, purpose, and hope among urban youth.

In Kenya, the provision of proper sports equipment, uniforms, and training, with the support of coaches, enabled hearing-impaired learners to compete at the regional and national levels. **This first-time exposure was transformative.** It took them beyond the confines of their school, allowed them to represent their school, and provided a platform to showcase their talents. This level of recognition validated their abilities on a national stage, profoundly impacting their aspirations and sense of pride. These diverse yet connected experiences affirm SESLA's central philosophy that sport can be a transformative tool for education, empowerment, and sustainable livelihoods.

The findings also revealed **significant behavioural and psychosocial shifts**, including strengthened belief in the future, improved confidence, and

renewed optimism amongst participants. Many youth reported feeling more capable, motivated, and connected to their communities, outcomes that are vital for long-term resilience and development. **Importantly, these findings highlight the intrinsic value of combining physical activities with psychosocial support, mentorship, and skill-building components, as these dimensions mutually reinforce one another to produce lasting impact.**

At the same time, the lessons learned underscore the importance of **sustainability, scale, and institutional learning**. Local partners and trainees emphasized the need to extend project reach to more schools and communities, integrate PV MSC processes into ongoing monitoring and evaluation cycles, and institutionalise participatory reflection across programme structures. Regular video screenings, staff reflection meetings, and theory of change reviews were consistently recommended to ensure that learning continues beyond the lifespan of the current phase. These reflective practices will keep the programme responsive to evolving community needs.

For SESLA funding partners, this research presents a compelling case for **continued investment in sports for development initiatives** that go beyond sports training to address the holistic wellbeing of youth. The programme's success demonstrates that when sports are linked with education, psychosocial learning, livelihood skills and local leadership, they can effectively bridge social divides, promote inclusion, and inspire hope in young populations often excluded from mainstream opportunities.

SESLA's regional scope revealed valuable insights for **cross-country learning and research**. The recurring emergence of **hope and dreams** as a dominant change theme across countries points to a shared psychological impact that

transcends borders. This common thread underscores the universality of sports as a medium for transformation and the importance of rigorous follow-up research to document and understand its long-term developmental outcomes.

SESLA stands as a **model of participatory, youth-driven, and context-sensitive development practice**. By leveraging sports and the reflective power of participatory storytelling in this Video Voice Research, it successfully bridged personal change with community transformation. The project's legacy lies not only in the tangible activities implemented across Africa but in the intangible yet profound shifts it inspired: confidence, resilience, unity, and hope. These are the foundations of sustainable livelihoods and meaningful social progress.

As SESLA moves forward, the challenge and opportunity lie in consolidating these gains. Scaling proven approaches, deepening community partnerships, and embedding participatory learning at every level of implementation. The project has shown that when young people are given the space to play, express, and lead, they do more than just participate, they transform themselves, their peers, and their societies.



School Screening In Kenya

Appendix I. Methodology

1. Training - Video Voice Research Implementation

1.1. PV MSC Activities and Participation

Trainee participants (selected grantee staff and a few targeted youth participants) are identified and taken through a five-day PV MSC facilitator

training. The table below presents the structure of the main training sessions and activities covered each day:

| Date | Activity undertaken |
|-----------|---|
| Arrival | InsightShare Trainer travels to the selected country site area. Together with local grantee team complete final preparations – review of workshop plan and prepare training space |
| Day 1 | Workshop Day 1: Trainees were taken through key steps in PV MSC methodology, facilitation skills, participatory filmmaking skills, consent and ethics, MSC question and the understanding of change. |
| Day 2 | Group 1: trainees facilitate PV MSC process for the first group of invited community participants. One talking circle involving mixed youth groups facilitated. One PV MSC story selected and recorded. |
| Day 3 | Group 2: trainees facilitate PV MSC process for second group of invited community participants. One talking circle involving mixed youth groups facilitated. One PV MSC story selected and recorded. |
| Day 4 | Trainees trained in participatory video editing, using testimonies captured during the fieldwork visit. Typing of testimonies collected through talking circles done. Preparing for video screening facilitation. |
| Day 5 | Screening of the documented videos done with the active participation of all trainees. Conduct participatory analysis of data collected – Identify blockers, enablers, changes, conclusions and key recommendations. Certificates issued to participants after successful completion of the five days activities. |
| Departure | Trainer departs, back to Nairobi |

1.2 MSC Question design

A Most Significant Change (MSC) question is jointly reviewed by trainee participants during the training day workshop based on the planning guide approved by SESLA partners, formulated first in English and translated into the local language to better guide the storytelling sessions. Several factors are considered when restructuring the MSC question, including the project evaluation needs, project timeframe, MSC process guidelines, as well as the need to allow stories to be told in a way that captures the individual, family and community level changes. Trainee participants discuss grantee activities supported by SESLA, to ensure relevance in scope throughout the exercise. The final MSC question is agreed upon, ensuring it's simple, well understood and allows the capturing of unexpected changes. Sample English version of a MSC question is shown below:

“What has been the most significant change (MSC) in your life before and after the support from project activities?”

1.3 Story circle and selection process

The group's youth participants are identified by the grantee organisation and include young people, both male and female, who were part of the SESLA-funded project from the beginning. Trainees facilitate PV MSC processes for two groups, one group per day. A story selection process is facilitated for each group that captures participants' testimonies. Story themes and selection criteria for narrated stories are identified and agreed upon. The criteria become indicators of the most significant change. Stories that meet the selection criteria are recorded.

1.4 PV MSC Video production

At least two PV MSC videos selected and recorded by the participants using a video or phone camera, one per story circle.

1.5 Video editing

The trainee participants are introduced to video editing, starting with an overview of footage management and followed by computer editing using iMovie software. Teams take rounds of editing so each member can have a feel of the technique.

1.6 Note Taking and Data Management

While some participants took turns to learn video editing, the rest of the team remained typing notes that were handwritten during the story circle sessions. This includes translations of the stories into the English language. The team types all individual stories told in story circles, as well as the recorded video stories.

1.7 Stakeholder Video Screening

Local grantee leads the selection of participants to take part in the screening event after considering initial consent for participation. Over 30 participants attend the screening event held at a common venue. Stakeholders invited included grantee staff, teachers, and students, government officials, amongst others. During the screening, stakeholders watch and discuss the videos documented. Additional information is collected through stakeholder discussions. This information is utilised in triangulating and validating the primary information collected through story circles.

1.8 Participatory Data Analysis

Each story told by the young people is reviewed, identifying all possible key blockers, key enablers and key changes. Coloured cards are used to record each type of data. Red cards are used to represent BLOCKERS, otherwise known as challenges, green for ENABLERS and white for CHANGES. Under CHANGES, the key shifts in the lives of the youth in each story are recorded. Under ENABLERS, the key enabling factors to

achieve those changes are recorded. Under BLOCKERS, the key factors that negatively affected the lives of the young people, as identified in each story, are also recorded. Quotes, visions, and recommendations are also considered. The cards per category adhere to colour codes as defined above, with one card for each key blocker, enabler or change statement. This forms the basis for the participatory analysis process.

Following a session of reflection and identifying key blockers, enablers and changes, all information recorded on the

cards becomes ready for further, deeper reflection. The sub-groups, in a “cloud” of blockers, enablers, and changes, are then rearranged into causal change paths on the floor or wall to create an affinity map.

The trainees then start the process of extracting information from the affinity map. Furthermore, a rapid process of exercises to capture what information is seen in the data and how to articulate what the data is saying about the project outcomes is undertaken.



Story Circle In Benin

Appendix II: Change maps from each country each country

The following pages came directly from the young people. We have kept their words without changing grammar or presentation to preserve the data.

Morocco

Direction of Causal Change as established during trainee participatory analysis exercise

Blockers/Challenges

- Lack of support
- Systemic gaps
- Limited access to sporting opportunities
- Emotional Barriers
- Competitive pressure

Enablers:

- Structured support programmes such as basketball
- Mentorship and Coaching (United/Coach)
- Community support (highly influenced by religion)
- Persistence/purpose

Changes:

- Sense of belonging/united Family
- Dreams and hope to be a professional player
- Persistence/resilience
- Celebrations/happiness

Direction of Causal Change as established during trainee participatory analysis exercise

Tunisia

Direction of Causal Change as established during trainee participatory analysis exercise

Blockers/Challenges

- Lack of Confidence
- Family Challenges
- Lack of knowledge and Skills

Enablers:

- Family Support
- Sports/Skating
- Schooling
- Education Hub/GSX

Changes:

- New Skills and Knowledge
- Better mental well-being (Emotions and Feelings)
- Better friendships

Rwanda

Direction of Causal Change as established during trainee participatory analysis exercise

Blockers/Challenges

- Lack of Self Esteem
- Education Challenges (e.g. school fees)
- Lack of Skills
- Health Issues
- Personal issues
- Family hardships

Enablers:

- Dancing and Sports
- Resilience
- MindLeaps
- English and Debate
- School

Changes:

- Improved Self Esteem
- More Hopeful
- Improved English Language
- Improved public speaking skills
- Gained IT skills
- More active in dancing/sports
- Better Education

Uganda

Direction of Causal Change as established during trainee participatory analysis exercise

Blockers/Challenges

- No knowledge of menstrual health hygiene
- Poverty
- No knowledge of safeguarding and reporting
- Low self-esteem due to menstrual stigma
- School absenteeism caused by menstrual issues
- No opportunity for girls to play football

Enablers:

- Football coaching
- Gained skills and knowledge in menstrual hygiene
- Safeguarding principles/skills
- Access to menstrual products/distributed
- Use of trained coaches

Changes:

- Gained football skills and got opportunity to play football
- Gained skills and knowledge in menstrual hygiene
- Better self-awareness/esteem, bold and confident
- Students are empowered to transfer skills
- Better safeguarding practices
- Better school attendance
- Improved performance in school grades
- Happy parents

Direction of Causal Change as established during trainee participatory analysis exercise

Benin

Direction of Causal Change as established during trainee participatory analysis exercise

Blockers/Challenges

- Separated parents
- Family problems/challenges
- Child labour
- Poor performance in school
- Early pregnancy
- Polygamy

Enablers:

- Football coaches
- ODDDB Project
- Tree planting
- Playing football
- Being in school

Changes:

- Improved knowledge in tree planting
- Increased income

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Direction of Causal Change as established during trainee participatory analysis exercise

Blockers/Challenges

- Suffering
- Lack of Education
- Parents' divorce
- Lack of Means
- Family Sickness

Enablers:

- Means to life
- Malaika Support
- Family Support
- Schooling
- Friends

Changes:

- Vision and Hope
- Resilient Youth
- Improved Skills
- Better employment/Income

Kenya

Direction of Causal Change as established during trainee participatory analysis exercise

Blockers/Challenges

- Poverty
- Communication/Hearing Challenge
- Family Challenges
- Sickness
- Child Labour
- Mental Health Issues/Isolation/Fear

Enablers:

- Friends
- DEAFOP Project
- Deaf School
- Family Support
- Sports

Changes:

- Mental Health/Wellbeing/sense of belonging/Self Esteem
- Improved knowledge and life skills
- Improved awareness of livelihood options and Career choices
- Active in Sports

South Africa

Direction of Causal Change as established during trainee participatory analysis exercise

Blockers/Challenges

- Disconnected from nature
- Negative Influence from friends
- Family challenges and lack of support
- Lack of knowledge and experience in water
- Fear of nature

Enablers:

- Family and Friends
- I Am Water
- School
- Environmental Education/Club
- Coach Support
- Mindfulness and awareness of surrounding
- Ocean and connection with nature
- Water activities – Swimming/Snorkeling

Changes:

- Increased Environmental education/Knowledge
- Positive attitude towards the environment
- Connection with nature
- Positive emotions from and towards nature

Appendix III: Acknowledgements

SESLA Grantee Partners and in-country facilitators that were actively involved in this research project includes:

Uganda: Tackle

| | Name | Role in PV/MSC Research Activity |
|---|----------------------|--|
| 1 | Atugonza Daphine | Senior 2 Class – Facilitator |
| 2 | Karungi Stella | Primary 6 Class – Facilitator |
| 3 | Alinaitwe Britah | Primary 6 Class – Facilitator |
| 4 | Murungi Rose | Teacher and Football Coach – Facilitator |
| 5 | Tusiime Harriet | Teacher and Football Coach – Facilitator |
| 6 | Aanyu Peace Patricia | Project Officer – Facilitator |

Morocco: United Africa

| | Name | Role in PV/MSC Research Activity |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Israe Halloumi | Basketball player and Facilitator |
| 2 | Yahya Dikhouya | Basketball player and Facilitator |
| 3 | Walid Dinani | Basketball player and Facilitator |
| 4 | Rayane Merzouk | Basketball player and Facilitator |
| 5 | Inasse Boutarchi | Basketball player and Facilitator |

Rwanda: MindLeaps

| | First Name | Role in PV/MSC Research Activity |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | Noella Uwera | Student Facilitator |
| 2 | Furaha Sibomana | Student Facilitator |
| 3 | Didier Dushimimana | Student Facilitator |
| 4 | Sheilla Agasaro Shema | Volunteer and Facilitator |
| 5 | Kevin Hakizimana | Assistant Education Coordinator, MindLeaps |

South Africa: I Am Water

| | Name | Role in PV/MSC Research Activity |
|---|-------------------|---|
| 1 | Marlin van Sensie | Senior Coach and Intern (facilitator) |
| 2 | Taahirah Sait | Senior Coach and Intern (facilitator) |
| 3 | James Njoloza | Team Coach and Adventure-Based Learning candidate |
| 4 | Siphamandla Barns | Team Coach and Adventure-Based Learning candidate |
| 5 | Chrysea Johnson | Communications Manager |

Benin: Organisation pour le Développement Durable et la Biodiversité (ODDB)

| | Name | Role in PV/MSC Research Activity |
|---|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Agossou Modeste | Field Assistant and Facilitator |
| 2 | Boko Claudine | Community Member and Facilitator |
| 3 | Gandonou Renaud | Community Member and Facilitator |
| 4 | Mongbede François | Community Member and Facilitator |
| 5 | Gbedo Laurent | Communication Manager and Facilitator |
| 6 | Goudjo Nelson | Facilitator |

DRC: Malaika

| | Name | Role in PV/MSC Research Activity |
|---|-----------------|--|
| 1 | Smith Kamwabu | Malaika Centre Manager |
| 2 | Natacha Mosakwa | Administrative assistant, Malaika School |
| 3 | Donat Tshisuaka | IT Manager |
| 4 | Russell Kisimba | Malaika Photographer |
| 5 | Nissi Njenga | Malaika Photographer |
| 6 | Joelle Kalobe | Malaika Photographer |
| 7 | Benedicte Kat | Malaika Photographer |

Tunisia: Génération Sports X-trêmes (GSX)

| | Name | Role in PV/MSC Research Activity |
|---|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Ons Sallemi | Youth Skater and Facilitator |
| 2 | Hanin Ouesleti | Youth Skater and Facilitator |
| 3 | Koussay Younsi | Youth Skater and Facilitator |
| 4 | Youssef Glili | Youth Skater and Facilitator |
| 5 | Mohammed Yassine | Youth Skater and Facilitator |
| 6 | Sirage Lahouah | Social Media Manager and Facilitator |

Kenya: Deaf Outreach Programme (DEAFOP)

| | Name | Role in PV/MSC Research Activity |
|---|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Esther Nzambi | Facilitator |
| 2 | Susan Karimi | Facilitator |
| 3 | Elosy Muthoni | Facilitator |
| 4 | Moris Fundi | Facilitator |
| 5 | Oscar Mwangi | Translator and Facilitator |

Appendix IV: List of SESLA Grantees and their projects (2025)

1. **Associação Moçambicana de Capoeira (Mozambique):** The programme uses capoeira (an Afro-Brazilian martial arts and game) as a central tool to promote the education and employability of young people.
2. **Association pour le Sourire d'un Enfant (Senegal):** Together with Thiès Sporting Academie and Fédération Sénégalaise d'Escrime the programme 'Fencing, Senegal, Emancipation' (FennSEE+) promotes alternative solutions, through and in sport, to provide employment and social inclusion opportunities for youth in conflict with law in Senegal and promote gender equality.
3. **Beder Organisation (Tunisia):** They focus on building strong, inclusive community relationships, emphasising youth leadership and innovation.
4. **ChezaCheza Mission Foundation (Kenya):** In collaboration with Jackfruit Finance, 'Dance for Change: Empowering Youth and Schools in Kenya' offers an innovative approach to teacher training by integrating dance into social-emotional learning in low-income schools.
5. **Coordination Nationale des Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs - CNAEJT / SN (Senegal):** CNAEJT is dedicated to informing and training young people about their rights and to carry out actions to achieve them.
6. **Deaf Outreach Program (Kenya):** With collaborating partner Institute for Disability Training, they will empower young people who have a hearing impairment through volleyball.
7. **Friends of Health Initiative (Rwanda):** Their mission is to enhance the standard of living and health for underserved populations through education, advocacy, research and community action.
8. **Génération Sports Extrêmes (Tunisia):** GSX fosters an environment where individuals come together to exchange ideas and push their limits in board sports, with their programme 'GSX Education Hub' focusing on education and social inclusion for their participants.
9. **MindLeaps (Rwanda):** Their programme 'Moving & Learning Together' is designed to help young people access employment opportunities and education.
10. **Organisation pour le Développement Durable et la Biodiversité (Benin):** Their mission is to protect and enhance the biodiversity of conservation areas, and use football to raise awareness of environmental and educational issues through their programming.

11. **Plan International Rwanda (Rwanda):** By teaming up with Learn Work Develop, their programme engages young people: both women and men - in cycling, mechanics, welding and more, breaking gender stereotypes and offering leadership opportunities.
12. **CATCH Trust (formerly The Gary Kirsten Foundation) (South Africa):** The collaboration with the Lucha Lunako Foundation will equip young coaches with technical sports skills, entrepreneurial foundations, and vocational skills that promote sustainable livelihoods.
13. **Thousand Hills Rugby (Rwanda):** Their missions is to use rugby as a vehicle to improve access to education, promote gender equality, and provide job opportunities, focusing on player development and partnerships.
14. **United Africa (Morocco):** Their 'United for Employability' programme provides structured activities, including mentoring, tailored training, and sports, to help young people develop the skills necessary for long-term employment.



Filming In Tunisia