

MATHARE YOUTH SPORTS ASSOCIATION

Giving youth a sporting chance



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

See also www.mysakenya.org

Why is it called the *Mathare* Youth Sports Association?

We call ourselves the *Mathare* Youth Sports Association because all our young members and youth leaders are from families living in the Mathare valley and neighbouring slums. We purposely chose that name because one of our goals was to change the bad and unfair reputation of Mathare.

Where are the Mathare slums?

The Mathare slums are only a few kilometres northwest of the central business district in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. The Mathare River runs through Nairobi and passes through the richest residential area, Muthaiga, where many diplomats and businessmen live. The Mathare slums start a few hundred metres downstream from them so some of the richest and poorest are neighbours but live in two different worlds.



How big are the Mathare slums?

The Mathare area is one of the largest and poorest slums in Africa and home for at least half a million adults and children. Over 70% are hardworking mothers and their children whose fathers died or abandoned their families. But one problem about Mathare and other slums is there are so few studies and facts available. When the United Nations collects statistics they

use only two categories, *urban* and *rural*. The slums with their urban poor are hidden inside the urban statistics, just as the slums are hidden in the city so few visitors ever see them. Yet in Nairobi and many other big cities in Africa, more than *half* the population lives in slums.

What are the Mathare slums like?

Many families of five or more adults and children live in small shacks about three metres square made of mud, sticks, cardboard and flattened tins. The wall of one shack is the same for the next. Our homes have no water, no electricity, no toilets, no garbage collection and no sewage lines. When it rains, the roof leaks. Rainwater often pours through the roof and walls. On sunny days it is still too dark to read or do schoolwork inside. As the sun is too hot outside, we cook inside on small charcoal stoves. Although we have little worth stealing, as soon as it gets dark we must lock our doors.

Why are the people of Mathare so poor?

We did not choose to be poor. We and our parents were born poor. Our families remain poor largely because of neglect and corruption. Even donor aid agencies often neglect Mathare and other urban slums because they think slums are too difficult and dangerous so find it easier to work in rural areas. But MYSA is lucky to have many good friends, especially in Holland, Norway, Sweden and the UK.



What is the biggest worry?

Getting sick and dying is our biggest worry. We cannot afford to be sick or to get proper treatment when we are. Water is also a big problem. We must buy our water in 10-20 litre containers and carry them home. That is the same as 1-2 flushes of a toilet but it has to last our families for a whole day or more. We even pay more per litre for our water than the rich people who get it through their taps. A lot of sickness is caused by too little water or too much water. When it rains a lot, the water flows through the garbage and human waste, down the hill and *through* our homes. Then we are surrounded by contaminated water and many kids get sick and die. AIDS is also a serious threat.

Are people in Mathare bitter or depressed?

Although we have lots of reasons to be, we aren't. We can't afford to get bitter or depressed and give up because then we die. We are too busy struggling to survive for another day. In our small communities we share and help each other a lot. If our mother gets sick and is the only one earning money for

our rent and food, our family really suffers. That is why our mothers belong to self-help groups as the members don't all get sick at the same time. We always help each other get through the bad times.

What is MYSA?

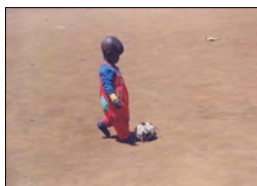
MYSA is a *development* project which pioneered the linking of sports with social improvement and community development activities. Today MYSA is the largest self-help youth sports and community service organization in Africa. Over 20,000 youth on over 1,600 boys and girls teams in over 100 leagues in 16 zones now participate in the different MYSA programmes.

When did MYSA start?

We started in 1987 as a small self-help youth project to organize our own sports. In 1988 we started our slum garbage and environmental cleanup projects, adopted our Constitution and registered legally as a non-governmental, non-political and non-profit organization under the Societies Act of Kenya.

How did MYSA start?

MYSA was founded by Bob Munro, a Canadian working for the UN and African governments as an adviser on environmental policy and sustainable development, with some members of a youth group at the nearby St. Teresa's church. Bob says MYSA is his payback to the volunteer fathers who organized the youth sports leagues when he was growing up in the town of St. Catharines in Canada. For Bob and his friends, he says school was what they did in between Saturdays when they competed with and against their friends. He says he learned a lot about teamwork and self-discipline through sports and wanted the Mathare youth to get a chance to test and develop their talents on and off the field as well. Bob is still the Chairman of the MYSA Board of Trustees.



How do youth become members?

Any youth in the Mathare and neighbouring slums becomes a member by joining a local MYSA team or project. As their families are far too poor, there are no membership fees or other charges.

What does MYSA do?

MYSA organizes a wide range of self-help youth sports and community development activities. Highlights include:

■ **Involving youth in development:** Youth are over half the population in Mathare and Africa. Their many talents and concerns are often neglected in development plans and projects. The main goal and motto of MYSA is to '*Give youth a sporting chance*' to help themselves and their community. We train our own leaders in courses run by our MYSA Sports and Community Leadership Academy. Our long-term goal is to help develop the leadership skills and leaders needed to help build the new Kenya.



■ **Linking sport and environmental cleanup:** Sport is often ignored or treated as a marginal and elite activity in development plans and projects. The same plans often appeal for greater public "participation" and "mobilization of youth" but with limited success. MYSA is based on the simple fact that every football team is also a "mobilized" youth group. The MYSA boys and girls teams play matches but also carry out weekly garbage and environmental cleanup projects.



■ **Reducing disease and deaths in the slums:** Uncollected garbage and blocked drainage ditches are major causes of disease, disability and deaths in Mathare. The greatest threat is during the seasonal rains when water contaminated by garbage and human waste floods around and even into our homes. Our youth carry out weekly garbage and drainage cleanup projects. Teams earn six points in the league standings for each completed project.

■ **Tackling the AIDS threat:** Poverty and ignorance are major causes of AIDS. Like many slums, Mathare is a high risk area. Hundreds of Mathare youth leaders between 13-20 years old have been trained on AIDS prevention and counselling. Most are top players as they are a vulnerable and high risk group. But as the new heroes in Mathare, they are also an effective way to reach other youth with crucial information on AIDS risks and prevention.

■ **Reducing substance abuse:** To blur the edges of their tough lives, too many youth sniff glue and petrol or abuse drugs and alcohol. A top priority in MYSA is to provide every team with footballs so

they can train regularly. That helps many to stop because of peer pressure from teammates to keep fit. These issues are also part of all our AIDS training workshops.

■ **Helping young leaders stay in school:** Due to their large families and desperate poverty, many youth are forced to leave school. Under the MYSA Leadership Awards Project, the youth earn points for their achievements in different sports and community service activities. Over 450 awards are now made annually to help the best young leaders stay in school and are paid directly to their school.



■ **Helping Mathare youth excel in school:** Without electricity, even at noon it is too dark for our youth to read inside their homes and few Mathare schools have libraries. MYSA has now created small libraries and study halls in four MYSA zones which are used by local schools during the week and our own members after school and on weekends.

They are so popular that we now aim to create one in each of the remaining 12 MYSA zones.

■ **Encouraging young artistic talents:** Our programmes include training youth in dancing, drumming and singing as well as drama and puppetry. Their performances highlight key social issues such as AIDS and drug and alcohol abuse. Since 2004 the MYSA Haba na Haba group of 11-14 year olds have performed at the Haugesund Children's Festivals in Norway.



■ **Helping jailed kids:** Over a hundred streetkids from 4-16 years old were being processed weekly at the Juvenile Court. The kids were held in two small cells without lights, seats, ventilation or toilets. In cooperation with local authorities, MYSA helped renovate the court facilities and also feed and interview the kids. Our staff help contact and return them to their families and then link their families with a micro-savings and loan programme for improving the family income.

■ **Changing gender attitudes:** Traditional views of men toward women and of women about themselves are serious constraints on social and political development. Both views changed among the Mathare youth since the mid-1990s with the rapid success of the girls football teams in Kenya and abroad and the integration of girls in the MYSA decision-making committees and staff. Half of all elected MYSA leaders are girls.

■ **Practicing good governance and accountability:** MYSA is owned and run by the youth. There are over 100 leagues in the 16 MYSA zones. All key decisions are made by locally elected youth leaders. The best leaders are elected to the overall MYSA executive bodies. The average age of our several hundred MYSA volunteer organizers, leaders, coaches and referees is 15-16 years. Our accounts are independently audited every year.



■ **Expanding horizons and hopes:** Through their many achievements on and off the field our youth acquire new self esteem and confidence. The nearly 1,000 Mathare youth who have participated in the

Norway Cup and youth tournaments in Holland and lived with host families returned home with new views about themselves, the world and their future. Many of our best leaders and players are Norway Cup graduates. Others have earned diplomas or are still pursuing advanced studies in accounting, business administration, computer programming and medicine.

■ **Creating new role models:** As too many fathers neglect or abandon their families, the survival of many kids depends entirely on their hardworking mothers. Lacking other role models, the top players, coaches and youth leaders in MYSA have become the new heroes and role models for the youth in Mathare and for millions of youth in other poor urban and rural communities in Kenya.

■ **Changing public images of slums:** When MYSA started our youth rarely admitted being from Mathare because of the bad and unfair public image of the slums. The print and TV news reports about MYSA achievements on and off the field helped change those attitudes in and outside Kenya. So did the unique 'Shootback' book of photographs taken by trained MYSA youth on their lives and living conditions which was published and sold worldwide.



■ **Changing distorted images of Africa:** Drought, famine, corruption and war too often dominate news reports on Africa. That distorts reality as the poor majority of people in Africa are peaceful, honest, hardworking and young. Projects like MYSA and the youth exchanges with host families in Norway and Holland help change distorted attitudes and images about Africa and about the poor and slums in Africa.

■ Does MYSA help youth outside the Mathare slums?

Yes. For example, MYSA's jailed kids project helps all kids. Although many are from Mathare, more than half of the jailed kids are from other slums in Nairobi as well as poor communities in central and western Kenya. MYSA has also assisted the Moving the Goalposts Project for girls in Kilifi District and initiated the Kakuma refugee camp project for youth from eight countries. MYSA staff helped set up similar youth sports and community service projects in Botswana, Tanzania, Uganda and southern Sudan. With the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) Academy, MYSA instructors have led KNVB/MYSA courses in Botswana, Cape Verde, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, southern Sudan, Viet Nam and Zambia.



How is MYSA funded?

MYSA depends on donor funding as the families of our youth are far too poor to pay fees and there are few other options for MYSA to generate income from activities in such a desperately poor area as the Mathare slums. In the last decade the largest part of our budget has been from the people of Norway through NORAD and the Strømme Foundation. Other key partners currently include the World Sports Academy/Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, Comic Relief (UK), Bjorn Borg AB (Sweden), StreetFootballWorld/FIFA Football for Hope and the KNVB Academy. A list of former and existing partners is attached.



How can others help MYSA?

Individuals and organizations can make either general or project-specific contributions to MYSA. For example, many prefer to contribute to the MYSA Leadership Awards Project where a donation of Ksh 12,000 (US\$160; £100; €110) helps keep a young MYSA leader in school for another year.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Kenyan achievements

- 1987 First football leagues in Kenya and Africa organized by youth on a self-help basis
- 1988 First in Kenya and Africa to organize U12 boys football leagues
- 1988 Kenyan U18 Boys Champions
- 1991 Provincial U16 Boys Champions
- 1991 Boit Ghetto Cup U16 Boys Champions
- 1992 First in Kenya and Africa to organize U12 and U14 girls football leagues
- 1994 First in Kenya and Africa to train young footballers on AIDS prevention
- 1994 Provincial U18 Boys Champions
- 1996 First MYSA players joined the Kenyan national team
- 1996 Provincial U18 Boys Champions
- 1997 Provincial U17 Boys Champions
- 1997 Kenyan Women's Football Champions
- 1998 Mathare United won the Moi Golden Cup
- 1999 MYSA "Shootback" photography book launched in London
- 1999 Provincial U17 Boys Champions
- 1999 Mathare United win Kenya Hedex Millennium Cup
- 2000 MYSA programme in the Kakuma Refugee Camp started
- 2000 Mathare United won the Moi Golden Cup
- 2001 Mathare Youth FC (U18) professional team started
- 2003 Mathare United Women's FC professional team started
- 2003 MYSA music, dancing and singing group released first CD and toured Norway
- 2004 MYSA Sports and Community Leadership Academy launched
- 2005 Mathare Youth FC (U21) qualified for the Kenyan Premier League
- 2005 MYSA leaders assisted projects in Botswana, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda
- 2006 MYSA "Images in MDGs" photography book launched at World Urban Forum
- 2007 MYSA leaders attended Gender Equity in Sport for Social Change Conference in Morocco
- 2007 MYSA girls leader participated in the 2010 FIFA World Cup draw in South Africa
- 2008 MYSA/Samsung NextHero campaign started
- 2008 Mathare United won the Kenyan Premier League



International achievements

- 1988 First organization in the world to link sport with environmental cleanup and community service
 1992 Eco-Youth Games U16 Champions, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
 1995 Norway Cup U12 Boys (Gold)
 1996 First girls team from Africa to participate in the Norway Cup
 1997 Norway Cup U12 Boys (Bronze) and U14 Girls (Bronze)
 1998 Norway Cup U12 Boys (Gold) and U14 Girls (Silver)
 1999 First MYSAs player won a scholarship to a college abroad
 1999 First MYSAs player joined a professional team in Europe
 1999 Norway Cup U12 Boys (Gold)
 2000 Norway Cup U13 Boys (Bronze) and U14 Girls (Silver)
 2001 Colour Line Cup and Dana Cup U13 Boys Champions
 2001 Norway Cup U13 Boys (Gold), U14 Girls (Gold) and U16 Boys (Silver)
 2002 Norway Cup U13 Boys (Gold), U14 Girls (Bronze) and U16 Boys (Bronze)
 2003 Norway Cup U13 Boys (Gold)
 2004 MYSAs instructors lead KNVB courses in Mozambique and Zambia
 2005 Norway Cup U14 Girls (Silver)
 2006 East African Cup U16 Girls (Gold), U16 Boys (Gold), U20 Girls (Gold)
 2006 Norway Cup U13 Boys (Gold), U16 Boys (Bronze)
 2006 First StreetFootballWorld Cup champions at FIFA World Cup in Germany
 2007 MYSAs instructors lead KNVB courses in Cape Verde, India, Senegal and South Africa
 2007 East Africa Cup U16 Girls (Gold), U16 Boys (Gold), U20 Girls (Gold), U20 Boys (Silver)
 2007 Norway Cup U13 Boys (Gold) and U14 Girls (Gold)
 2007 Delft International Tournament in Holland, U16 Boys (Gold)
 2008 Norway Cup U13 Boys (Gold)
 2009 Norway Cup U13 Boys (Gold)



International awards

- 1992 UNEP Global 500 Award for environmental innovation/achievement (Rio de Janeiro)
 1999 Global Help for Self-Help Prize by the Strømme Foundation (Oslo)
 1999 MYSAs/Brumunddal project cited as a model for the European Year against Racism (Strasbourg)
 2000 First Project of the World Sports Academy/Laureus Sport for Good Foundation (Monaco)
 2001 First CAF African Youth Development Award (Johannesburg)
 2002 Named CECAFA Model Club for East and Central Africa (Kigale)
 2003 Prince Claus Award for cultural achievement (Amsterdam)
 2003 MYSAs nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (Oslo)
 2004 World Sports Academy/Laureus Sport for Good Award (Lisbon)
 2004 MYSAs re-nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (Oslo)
 2004 International Fair Play Prize (Athens)
 2008 Score4Africa Award for best and most innovative environmentally sustainable project (London)



MYSA PARTNERS 1987-09

Government/Communities

- Brumunddal, Øygard and Sogne communities, Norway (Youth Exchange Project)
 Groesbeek community, Holland (Slum Libraries/Study Halls Project)
 Haugesund Children's Festival, Norway (Youth Exchange Project)
 Kenyan Ministry of Youth and Sports (Sports Projects)
 Kenyan Ministry of Health (HIV/AIDS Prevention/Training Project)
 Nairobi City Council (Slum/Environmental Cleanup Project)
 Nairobi Provincial Children's Department (Jailed Kids Project)
 Norwegian Ministry of Environment (Slum/Environmental Cleanup Project)
 Wijchen and Woudenberg communities, Holland (Youth Exchange Project)



Sports organizations

- Australian Sports Commission (Kids with Disabilities Project)
 Commonwealth Games Association of Canada (Sports and Botswana Projects)
 FIFA (Football for Hope Centre/Project)
 IK Start, Kristiansand, Norway (Youth Exchange and Sports Projects)
 Kenyan Football Referees Association (MYSAs Sports/Community Leadership Academy)
 Kenyan Premier League Ltd (Coaches Training Project)



Kristen Idrettskontakt, Norway (Projects in Tanzania and Uganda)
 Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, UK (New MYSA HQs, Sports and Leadership Awards and MYSA Academy Projects)

Manchester United FC, UK (Youth Exchange Project)

Netherlands Sports Council/Olympic Committee (Sports/Refugee Kids Projects)



Norway Cup (Youth Exchange Project)

Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) Academy (MYSA Academy)

StreetFootballWorld, Germany (Football for Hope Centre/Project)

UK Sport (HIV/AIDS Prevention/Training Project)

Union Sports Club, Nijmegen, Holland (Youth Exchange Project)

Other organizations and companies

Bjorn Borg AS, Sweden (Governance and Decentralization Projects)

International Watch Company (IWC), Switzerland (MYSA Academy)

Jamii Bora Trust, Kenya (Jailed Kids Project)

K. D. Wire, Kenya (New MYSA HQs; Slum/Environmental Cleanup Project)

Kenyatta University (MYSA Sports and Community Leadership Academy)

KICKING



Kicking AIDS Out (HIV/AIDS Prevention/Training Project)

KidsLibs Trust (Slum Libraries/Study Halls Project)

Macharia Njeru Advocates, Kenya (Legal advisers/Jailed Kids Project)

Nike, Holland/USA (Girls Football and Sports Projects)

AIDS OUT!

Patel, Shah & Joshi, Kenya (External Auditors)

Safaricom Kenya Ltd (Fitness Centre Project)

Samsung Kenya Ltd (NextHero Campaign/Girls Football/Leadership Awards)

Sara Lee Kenya Ltd (Mathare North Zone and Slum Library/Study Halls Projects)

Wilde Ganzen, Holland (Slum Libraries/Study Halls Project)

Bilateral and international organizations

APAID (Kids with Disabilities Project)

Australian High Commission (Kids with Disabilities Project)

British High Commission (Slum Libraries/Study Halls and Fitness Centre Projects)



Care International (Youth Exchange Project)

Comic/Sports Relief, UK (MYSA Academy/Strategic Planning Projects)

Commonwealth Sport and Development Conference (Culture and Sport Project)

DANIDA: Danish Development Cooperation Agency (Sports Project)

Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung, Germany (HIV/AIDS Prevention/Training Project)

FORD Foundation (Shootback/Photography Training Project)

Fredskorpset, Norway (Physiotherapy/First Aid Training Project)

ILO: International Labour Organization (Anti-Child Labour Project)

Netherlands Development Cooperation Agency (Sports and Refugee Kids Projects)

NORAD, Norway (Sports and Slum/Environmental Cleanup Projects)

Pathfinder International (HIV/AIDS Prevention/Training Project)

PlaytheGame (Corruption-Free Football Project)



Prince Claus Fund, Netherlands (Jailed Kids, Shootback and Refugee Kids Projects)

Sida: Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (Jailed Kids Project)

Strømme Foundation, Norway (Sports/Leadership Training/Slum Cleanup Projects)

UN-HABITAT: United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Youth Exchange Project)

UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme (Photography Training Project)

UN Sport for Development and Peace (Youth Exchange)

WHO: World Health Organization (Stop TB Partnership)