

Women's power | The difference in the slum

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Summary

In the informal settlements of Nairobi, particularly in Korogocho, women and girls struggle daily with extreme poverty, a lack of sanitary infrastructure and high rates of gender-based violence. But amid these challenges, beacons of hope are emerging: the TEDS Community Hub creates safe spaces for disadvantaged girls, while local role models such as coach Maureen are breaking down gender stereotypes through sport. This article on International Women's Day shows how courage and community can bring about real change in everyday life.

Voices of change: empowerment in Korogocho on International Women's Day
8 March is a day of reflection – and protest – around the world. But while quotas are being discussed in many parts of the world, in the slums of Nairobi, girls and women are fighting for their most basic rights: safety, dignity and the freedom to learn without fear.

Korogocho, whose name translates as "shoulder to shoulder", is one of the most densely populated settlements in Kenya. An estimated 150,000 to 200,000 people live in an area of just 1.5 square kilometres. The living conditions there are often described as "inhumane".

The statistical facts paint a grim picture

Sanitary emergency: Only about 24% of residents have access to toilets. Women often have to walk long distances to communal facilities, which exposes them to a high risk of sexual assault, especially at night. Many are forced to use "flying toilets" (plastic bags) so they don't have to leave their homes after dark.

Violence as part of everyday life: An estimated 34% of women in Kenya have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. In the slums, the situation is exacerbated by the lack of police stations; neighbours often ignore cries for help, thinking they are private disputes.

Health risks: The pregnancy rate among teenagers (aged 15–19) is an alarming 15%. Poverty often leads to risky survival strategies such as prostitution, which in turn drives up HIV rates. Women in Korogocho often become "prisoners in their own homes" at night. The structures are made of recycled sheet metal and mud, which offers little protection as potential attackers can simply tear down the walls.

TEDS Community Hub: A safe haven for girls

This is the environment in which the TEDS Community Hub operates. The initiative has recognised that long-term change is only possible through the protection and education of the youngest generation.

Among other things, the hub focuses on disadvantaged girls. In an environment where the journey to school is dangerous due to a lack of lighting and crime, TEDS creates "safe spaces". Here, children can learn without fear and develop their potential. TEDS COMMUNITY HUB focuses on the key levers for change: education, health and protection. The aim is to take measurable steps to break the vicious cycle of poverty and violence.

Maureen: The face of modern empowerment

An outstanding example of the change in Korogocho is Maureen, an active supporter of the TEDS Community Hub. Her work in the Mashinani League (a grassroots sports initiative) impressively demonstrates what empowerment means in practice.



Maureen | A Korogocho role model

Maureen breaks radically with traditional role models

Success against the odds: as coach of the BUFO FC team, she has proven that leadership skills are not a question of gender. She has already led her young team to victory in the Mashinani League twice.

Respect on the pitch: Maureen is not only a coach, she also plays in an all-boys team herself. The fact that she is highly regarded and respected there is testament to a profound change in gender relations within Kenyan society.

Role model: Maureen is a living inspiration for the girls at TEDS COMMUNITY HUB. For many girls in Korogocho, she embodies the principle: "What a man can do, you can do too."

Through sport and voluntary work, Maureen offers young people an alternative to crime and drug addiction. It is easy for young people to get caught up in these things. Role models like Maureen fulfil such an important function. She has long since become a role model.

Positive trends: Hope on the horizon

Despite the immense hurdles, progress is being made. One notable success is the increase in births in professional healthcare facilities. While only 68.3% of women gave birth in clinics in 2003, this figure rose to 95% by 2015. This is mainly attributed to the temporary abolition of fees in public institutions.

Initiatives specifically for older women who train in self-defence also show that the women of Korogocho refuse to remain victims forever.

Conclusion on Women's Day

International Women's Day in Korogocho is not a day of flowers, but a day of power. Organisations such as the TEDS COMMUNITY HUB and personalities such as Maureen prove that change is possible when spaces for safety and education are created. Empowerment here means more than just finding one's own voice. It is about replacing disadvantages bit by bit with dignity and respect.

Q&A – Frequently asked questions about Korogocho and empowerment

Q: Why is the sanitary situation so dangerous for women? A: As few households have their own toilets, women have to use communal facilities at night. These routes are often unlit and unsafe, leading to a high risk of rape.

Q: What exactly does the TEDS Community Hub do? A: It offers protection programmes and educational opportunities for children, with a focus on creating safe learning environments for disadvantaged girls.

Q: Who is Maureen? A: Maureen is a local leader and volunteer at TEDS COMMUNITY HUB. She successfully coaches young men in football teams and breaks down gender barriers as a player in men's teams.

Q: Is there any government support? A: There are programmes such as "Linda Mama" for free obstetric care, but in practice there is often a lack of medicines and staff, which leads to additional costs for residents.

Further links

TEDS Community Hub & Korogocho News
<https://korogocho.com/teds-community-hub/>

Amnesty International report on the situation in Nairobi

<https://www.amnesty.ch/de/laender/afrika/kenia/dok/2010/kenya-frauen-in-slums>

Thomas Schwarz Bonn – International Girls Day Focus

<https://www.thomasschwarzbonn.de/2025/10/international-girls-day-fast-eine-million-maedchen-wachsen-in-den-slums-von-nairobi-auf/>

The reality for girls in Korogocho

<https://korogocho.com/one-million-girls-growing-up-in-nairobis-slums/>