

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Wales Institute for Research in Art & Design (Cardiff Met, USW and UWTSD)
Unit of Assessment: 34
Title of case study: ‘ <i>Zanzibar Soccer Queens</i> ’ (2007) and its Impact on Civil Society and Cultural Life in Africa and Europe
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

‘*Zanzibar Soccer Queens*’ has had a series of cultural, social and policy impacts since 2008.

These impacts include the emancipation of the players (‘*Women Fighters*’), improved respect and understanding of Muslim women, better health and wellbeing of women and girls in Zanzibar through increased involvement in sports, and a change in government policy to allow girls in Zanzibar to play football in schools. The film’s screenings have also been used to raise issues from racism in football to health matters such as HIV/AIDS.

[Throughout this template, references to underpinning research are numbered **1-6**; sources to corroborate are numbered **7-10**]

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)
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‘*Zanzibar Soccer Queens*’ [1] forms part of **Ayisi** (Reader in Film at University of South Wales (USW), 2005-present) and **Brylla’s** (Lecturer in Film, USW, 2005-present) long-term body of research through practice. Their research uses the methods of documentary film as modes of inquiry to investigate and engage with ideas, issues and questions that construct and present alternative images, especially ideas and images of girls and women in Africa, notably in Cameroon (West Africa) and Tanzania (East Africa) [2, 5, 6]. Drawing on concepts related to post-colonial theory, African Diaspora Studies, feminism, cultural representations, transnational cinemas, film audience reception and ethnographic film, the research is situated within the broader context and conceptual framework of counter cinematic narratives and ideas about Africa, in particular, the representation of women.

A constant methodological theme in this research is an ambition to further develop and expand on the scope and the discourse of video ethnography and ‘First Person’ film practices. These allow “ordinary” people opportunities to construct and tell their personal narratives through moving images and sounds and these are, in turn, the research data. A further research theme relates to the development of formal audience impact studies. The main theoretical thrust of this work has been in the field of cognitive hermeneutics [3, 4].

The research for *Zanzibar Soccer Queens* was carried out throughout 2006 leading to release at the Goteborg International Film Festival in February 2007. The film and subsequent discourses document the lives and football activities of “Women Fighters”, a team of women in a Muslim country, Zanzibar. It presents a community of strong-willed women determined to better their lives and define new identities through playing soccer. Their involvement with soccer goes beyond the pitch; they travel, socialise together on the beach, and play soccer with men. The research presents viewpoints from women determined to achieve personal goals beyond their prescribed traditional roles and expectations. The concept of Muslim women playing football is novel and

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challenges widely held perceptions about the role, image and status of women in Muslim countries. Such women endure multiple restrictions such as concealing their bodies and not being in public with men who are not their relatives. Thus, the research raises important questions such as, what motivates these women to play football? How do they deal with society's attitude towards their love for the game? What are the wider societal implications of their involvement? As Section 4 demonstrates, their determination in the face of adversity has led to a series of benefits for them and other Zanzibari women through the better understandings generated by the film's data.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

The main underpinning research for this work [1] has received multiple positive critical reviews:

- Kuipers, R. (2007) Review: 'Zanzibar Soccer Queens', *Variety*, <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117935340?refcatid=31>
- Cole, S.G. (2008) Review: 'Zanzibar Soccer Queens', *NOW*, 27(36), <http://www.nowtoronto.com/movies/story.cfm?content=162987&archive=27,36,2008>
- Guest, A. (2010) The women's game in Africa: 'Zanzibar Soccer Queens' and other tales, *Pitch Invasion*, <http://pitchinvasion.net/blog/2010/03/15/the-women%E2%80%99s-game-in-africa-%E2%80%98zanzibar-soccer-queens%E2%80%99-and-other-tales/>

It has received two awards: A 'Special Jury Award' at the Zanzibar International Film Festival (2007) and an Audience Award for Best Documentary Film at the Pink Apple Film Festival, Zurich, (2009). It was also part of the WIRAD submission to the 2008 RAE. The overall quality profile of that submission was 70% at 'World Leading' or 'Internationally Excellent'.

1. Ayisi F. (2007) Zanzibar Soccer Queens. Film Betacam SP, DVCAM and DVD (52 minutes)
2. Longinotto, K. & Ayisi, F., (2005) Sisters in law: stories from a Cameroon court. Women Make Movies, New York: a feature-length documentary film portraying aspects of women's lives and work in the judicial system in Cameroon, West Africa
3. Ayisi, F. & Brylla, C. (2011) A Cognitive-hermeneutical approach to audience reception of Sisters in Law. Paper given at International Conference, Women and Film in Africa: Overcoming Social Barriers, University of Westminster, November 2011
4. Ayisi, F. & Brylla, C. (2013) The politics of representation and audience reception: alternative visions of Africa. *Research in African Literatures* 44, 2 (E-ISSN: 1527-2044) <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2979/reseafritelite.44.2.125?uid=16164744&uid=3738032&uid=2134&uid=2&uid=70&uid=3&uid=5910784&uid=67&uid=3773792&uid=62&sid=21102966307447>
5. Ayisi, F. (2012) Making Waves on International Women's Day: Cameroonian Women's Dynamism. Paper presented at international conference, "Home/Land: Women Citizenship, Photographies", Loughborough
6. Ayisi, F. (2012) 'How We Live Today...' Florence Ayisi in dialogue with Mo White - in *Women, the Arts and Globalisation: Eccentric Experience*. Eds: Marsha Meskimmon and Dorothy C. Rowe. (Rethinking Art's Histories) (ISBN: 978-719-0-8875-9)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact of '*Zanzibar Soccer Queens*' does not primarily reside in football. Screenings at over 30 public exhibitions, festivals and other events helped surface many issues relating to the role and status of Muslim girls and women in Africa. It has influenced practice and policy and has helped professionals and organisations adapt to changing cultural values. For example, the '*Women Fighters*' took part in a USAID-sponsored match to create Social awareness of HIV/AIDS through Sports. Spectators were encouraged to watch the film to see the wider value of soccer in women's health, fitness and general well-being.

Impacts include:

1. Emancipation for the players and other women in Zanzibar;
2. Improved understanding of Muslim women through cultural exchange;
3. Raised sports profile for women in Zanzibar, including school sports education;
4. Improved health and wellbeing for girls and women in Zanzibar.

In 2013 USW commissioned Ayisi to return to Zanzibar for further fieldwork aimed at gathering Impact evidence. The result is a 23 minute film explaining '*Zanzibar Soccer Queens*' impacts through the passionate voices of the players, coach and key stakeholders including Zanzibar's Minister for Information, Culture and Sports. The film affords an important opportunity to understand the issues involved without a Euro-centric lens and can be viewed using this [weblink](#) [7].

'*Zanzibar Soccer Queens*' was screened in Zanzibar in 2007 to an audience of over 1,000 including Vice Minister of Information, Tourism, Sports and Culture and the Secretary General of the Zanzibar Football Association. The team benefitted immediately. Their coach, Nassra Juma, asserts that as a result of the film, society in Zanzibar has accepted that football can be played by women (Juma in [7], 05:06). One player states: "*Before, when we told our parents that we go for training they wouldn't permit it. Your brother would follow you to the pitch and beat you with a stick if he saw you there wearing shorts, or wearing a jersey. He would say that this game is for hooligans, girls do not play it – they are supposed to stay at home. But when they came to see that film being shown everywhere our brothers now remind us 'go for training, 'go on for training'*" (Zubeida in [7] at 05:54). Another player says: "*now when a woman plays football her parents are happy. They want girls to play football. We have come far and we are now moving on to another era*" (Khatima in [7], 15:09).

The effects reached well beyond individual women being allowed to play football. The team once marginalised as 'soccer hooligans' are now valued ambassadors for Zanzibar. The film gave them the opportunity to travel and to promote a positive view of Zanzibar and Muslim women in a series of cultural exchanges. Following a screening at the Globians Film Festival, the Regional Officer for Education, Integration and Democracy Brandenburg, invited them to Potsdam to promote links between Zanzibar and Germany (Mitawi in [7], 06:37). The team's transformed status was reflected in their official send off by the Minister for Information, Culture and Sports. "*He told us that we were going to Germany as mirrors of Zanzibar*" (Juma in [7], 08:17). In fact the team did more than merely reflect Zanzibar. By hosting screenings of the film followed by school Q&A sessions they became beacons of cultural and social reform. They simultaneously improved the visibility and understanding of the lives of female Zanzibaris and gained an understanding of European culture

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[8], (Mitawi in [7], 11:52). External parties also used the film to promote better understanding. Football Unites Racism Divides (FURD) included it in their 2012 Festival because “...it managed to raise so many issues around gender, race, religion and sport, and because we wanted to show something that focussed on particularly under-represented groups – in this case African women, challenging many stereotypes in the process” [9].

The trip generated significant media coverage in Zanzibar. As a result the team found that the numbers of women wanting to join the team increased (Ferouz in [7], 14:45). Increased participation was not confined to the ‘Women Fighters’, but was nationwide [10]. This was partly due to the government. In 2012 Zanzibar implemented a new Sports Education Policy promoting football for girls. Abdulghani Msoma, instructor for the Confederation of African Football, attributes this change to Ayisi’s film and the empowerment it gave Coach Juma to lobby the Government (Msoma in [7], 04:44 and 19:07). The policy has found favour among school staff: Headteacher Fatma Abeia: ‘Our government deems it right to teach this sport in schools. Schools are factories that produce good fruits’ (Abeia in [7], 23:04).

‘Zanzibar Soccer Queens’ has begun the normalisation of women and sport in Zanzibar. The result has been increased uptake in soccer from an early age with the social benefits that brings. One of the team summed her feelings up: “I feel that I too am just like everyone, like normal” (Zubeida in [7] 16:53).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

7. Ayisi, F. & Brylla, M. (2013) “ZSQ Impact Study”
https://www.dropbox.com/s/kwix9zo06i6p5y8/ZSQ_Impact%20Study.mov
8. Potsdam Film Museum (2009) Audience feedback reports: Zanzibar Soccer Queens – Football Women in Brandenburg
9. Statement from Resources and Information Worker, Football Unites Racism Divides
10. Schutzer, M. & Tygielski, K. (2012) “New Generation: Women’s Football in Tanzania”
<http://muslima.imow.org/content/new-generation-womens-football-zanzibar>