

Advancing Women in Golf through the Charter.

CASE STUDY: THE KENYA LADIES GOLF UNION

The Kenya Ladies Golf Union, established in 1936, is the oldest women's golf union in Africa. It plays a pioneering role in the administration and development of women's golf in Kenya and the wider East African region and is the umbrella organisation for women's golf in Kenya. The KLGU comprises of 16 volunteers.

Lucy Muhinga was the original trailblazer who, in 2018, had the vision and courage to sign the very first Women in Golf Charter on behalf of the KLGU. Though she sadly passed away on 30 January 2024, her legacy continues to inspire, and we honour her invaluable role in shaping the future of women's golf in Kenya.

In 2022, the current Chairperson, Rosemary Mkok, together with her committee, re-established and redrafted the Charter that is now in effect. The results are examined in this case study.

On 2 July 2025, Carol Lourens (South Africa – FLOOID HOD Golf) and Heather Gaunt (Scotland – Player Services Manager at The R&A) met with three committee members of the KLGU – Rosemary Mkok (Chairperson), Frankie Gichuru (Secretary) and Rita Waruinge (Treasurer).

The following case study examines the KLGU's strategy, which is aligned with their Charter and is anchored in inclusive leadership, grassroots programming and mentorship.

Through this approach, the KLGU has successfully increased participation in the game, empowered a new generation of female leaders and expanded access to golf across rural and coastal communities.



BACKGROUND

The R&A Women in Golf Charter

The R&A Women in Golf Charter is a global initiative launched by The R&A to promote gender equality in golf.

Kenya Ladies Golf Union's Role

The KLGU signed the Women in Golf Charter to align with global efforts aimed at increasing the participation and visibility of women and girls in golf. The Union viewed the Charter not as an external obligation, but as an affirmation of work it had already been undertaking for several years.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Vision

To be the leading ladies golf Union in Africa and beyond.

Mission

To promote, develop and elevate the status of ladies' golf in Kenya to produce world-ranked women golfers.

KLGU strategic objectives within the Charter include:

- Increase the number of women and girls in golf.
- Support the development of female golf leaders.
- Strengthen junior and elite talent pathways.
- Expand programming beyond urban areas.
- Empower clubs to align with the Charter.



Pictured from top: Rosemary Mkok, Chairman; Frankie Gichuru, Secretary; Rita Waruinge, Treasurer; Lucy Muhinga, the original charter trailblazer; The KLGU Volunteers

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

Governance and Leadership

KLGU is led by a diverse team of 16 professionals who make up the executive council, and they are all volunteers. Mentorship is central to the leadership model.

They have now appointed a Champion on their Women in Golf Charter commitments - Wanja Kimani.



Charter Pathway for Clubs

KLGU's efforts span competitive golf, school outreach, and high-performance development. Signature programmes include:

- **Girls' Golf Camps:** Targeting juniors aged five to 18 with the aim of demystifying golf and providing early access to the sport.
- **School Clinics and Outreach:** Focused on Nairobi and Mombasa, with plans to expand into rural counties.
- **Provide lessons for young girls** who they have identified as having talent. Once these girls (and boys) show talent and interest they are invited to participate in the Junior Golf Foundation.
- **Drives to encourage women to learn the game** and clubs are encourage to hold clinics with members inviting friends to try out the game of golf.
- **Handicapping Seminars and Rules Education:** Equipping women with the knowledge to play confidently and engage in administrative roles.
- **Mentorship and Parent Involvement:** Involving parents to foster long-term retention and encourage community-level support.
- **Regional Integration:** East African high-performance juniors are increasingly invited to national events, helping raise standards and regional solidarity.



Tangible Baseline Requirements

During the conversation, the KLGU realized that there is a huge missed opportunity namely: There is currently no baseline data for participation, leadership roles or high performance outcomes. So the commitment towards the end of the conversation, is to appoint someone from their union to take on this and to start baseline surveys at all golf clubs and track progress more intentionally. Very shortly after the interview, Wanja was appointed.

Data is not optional – its foundational. Every Charter signatory should develop a simple baseline and measurement framework and this is the work that Wanja will be focussing on.

Pictured from top: Wanja Kamani, KLGU's charter champion;
Photos from a Ladies clinic

KEY OUTCOMES

Quantitative Impact

- There is a significant measured growth in junior girl participation.
- More and more events/tournaments are being created for elite East African women golfers.
- All 38 clubs are engaged in Charter-related programmes.

Cultural Transformation

Kenya's deep-rooted cultural expectations around gender have often hindered women and girls from participating in sport. A reality check occurred at a recent club night, out of 240 golfers, only 22 were women. This illustrates the gender imbalances that still persist however this imbalance motivates leadership to persist.

KLGU has taken a deliberate stance to shift this narrative. By positioning golf as a tool for leadership and life skills, rather than just elite sport, it has gained broader buy-in from:

- Increased parental and community support.
- More female leadership in clubs and events.
- Former juniors returning as mentors and leaders.

Other Outcomes

KLGU's focus extends beyond players to include coaches, administrators, referees and volunteers.

Additionally, young women are being trained in rules officiating and tournament management, widening their opportunities in the sport.

The KLGU advice to other neighbouring African Countries is to embrace the Charter as a tool to empower women. It's not just about golf, it's about representation, equality and community transformation. Traditional gender roles still dominate. The Charter gives leaders "ammunition to fight for space and voice".



The Charter gives me the ammunition to help other women not live the life I led.
ROSEMARY MKOK

Pictured above: Kenya Juniors

CHALLENGES FACED

Challenges

Despite progress, KLGU has encountered a range of challenges:

- Volunteer Burnout.
- Funding and Resource Constraints.
- Cultural Resistance.
- Visibility Gap: Women's golf still lacks consistent media coverage and public attention, which affects sponsorship and growth.
- Key lessons include the importance of strategic partnerships, storytelling to drive buy-in, and aligning with broader national goals like education and youth development.
- Limited access to equipment and transport.

KLGU-Specific Challenges

- Balancing elite talent development with grassroots growth.
- Ensuring continuity through leadership succession.
- A recent challenge has been discussions around forming one union for Men, Women and Juniors called Kenya Golf. The KLGU are committed to ensuring that Kenya Golf is formed, but they are worried they will lose their voice, as well as votes, as men traditionally vote for men. So a deeper and fairer collaboration between both unions need to be discussed to ensure that there is an appointment of a joint Gender Inclusion Chairperson to demonstrate an intentional shift toward co-ownership of transformation.

FUNDING AND SUPPORT

KLGU functions largely through volunteer governance. They leverage small-scale partnerships and local fundraising while seeking external sponsorship and donor support.



Pictured: Kenya's golfers at the Africa Amateur

EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

KLGU reviews mentorship cycles annually. Key successes and milestones that the KLGU have achieved and are extremely proud of:

- Successfully hosted the All Africa Challenge Trophy.
- Developed a sustainable calendar of junior and women's events.
- Strengthened cooperation with KGU.
- Built trust with parents and communities, resulting in a marked increase in young girls taking up the sport.
- More junior girls are participating and handicaps are reducing. For example, **Kanana Muthomi** (13) holds the lowest Handicap Index among the ladies in the Country at -0.5. In 2024 and 2025 she participated in the Africa Amateur Championship at Leopard Creek, four girls and nine boys. This shows the disparity in numbers that KLGU are working on closing and hope by 2030 this gender gap will have diminished significantly. Another success is **Bianca Ngecu** (16). She plays off a Handicap Index of 2.3 and is top on the KLGU national order of merit for the junior girls. Both Bianca and Kanana are on The R&A supported Africa High Performance Programme.
- Professional women's golf in Kenya: Kenya currently has one lady professional, **Naomi Wafula**. Naomi is known for being the first Kenyan golfer to make the cut in a Ladies' European Tour event, finishing 56th overall.



BROADER LEARNINGS & BEST PRACTICE

- **Start with What You Have:** Use existing resources and networks to make incremental change.
- **Collaborate Across Genders:** Inclusion should be owned by all, not only by women
- **Invest in Early Exposure:** Introducing golf to girls at an early age builds a long-term base.
- **Communicate Widely:** Share stories, successes, and learnings to build momentum.
- **Create Safe and Fun Spaces:** Prioritise enjoyment, especially at entry-level, to overcome perceptions of exclusivity.
- **Appoint a Charter Lead** – to ensure accountability.
- **Baseline survey** – to better measure growth and impact.
- **Budgeting for Charter delivery** – formalise the Charter in planning
- **Desire for follow up and continued collaboration.** This shows appetite for community and shared learning.

There's opportunity in golf that women may not get in other sports.
RITA WARUINGE

Pictured from top: Kanana Muthomi; Bianca Ngecu; Naomi Wafula

CONCLUSIONS

This case study offers a compelling example of how leadership, collaboration and cultural awareness can drive sustainable progress in women's golf, not only in Kenya but across the African continent. The discussion was not only operational but emotional and deeply rooted in personal experience and cultural reality.

Rosemary Mkok shared her pride in how far the Union has come and her optimism for its future. She noted that the journey has not been without setbacks, but the collective resolve and resilience of the women involved is what sustains the progress.

Rita Waruinge highlighted how important it is to balance tradition with innovation, and how seeing young girls thrive in the sport brings her full-circle satisfaction.

Frankie Gichuru, reflected on the power of representation – “When a young girl sees another girl who looks like her swing a golf club, something changes. That’s where belief starts.”

We believe if we have another meeting one day, there will be a difference
ROSEMARY MKOK

RECOMMENDATIONS

To Other Unions

- Localise the Charter for club-level implementation.
- Appoint regional reps for outreach and mentorship.
- Re-engage former juniors as leaders.

To Policymakers and Donors

- Recognize golf's power in girls' leadership development.
- Fund junior golf clinics and rural outreach.
- Support training and mentorship for women leaders in golf.

This chat has made me realise that we should have plugged in the Charter as a specific actionable item from the beginning, with timelines and a budget. That way, it's more deliberate

ROSEMARY MKOK

In closing

This case study closes with gratitude and pride. Gratitude for the courage and foresight of the Kenya Ladies Golf Union in embracing the Women in Golf Charter, and pride that The R&A Women in Golf Leadership Development Programme has been able to share in telling this story.

To participate in both the Charter and its documentation is to help write a chapter in golf's future – one that is brighter, more inclusive and filled with opportunity. It is a journey that belongs to us all, and one we can celebrate together with confidence and hope.

For more information on The R&A Women in Golf Charter, visit www.randa.org

