

# Transforming Girls, Young Women & Communities Through Boxing



**“When I think about boxing, I feel wow! It has brought me from zero to somewhere. With the skills I have learnt, I want to go overseas and become an international boxing champion.”**

**Sofia Omar, 19, is Muslim young woman and part of BoxGirls Kenya. She joined while in high school, at the age of 16.**

As a result of engaging in the organisation's programmes, she has honed her boxing skills. In addition, she has nurtured her entrepreneurial abilities and become more proficient in financial management. Currently a mini-coach and life skills facilitator, Sofia has defied the odds and transcended stereotypes on the basis of her gender and religion. As a result, she has leveraged an inborn capacity for leadership to influence her peers and mentor young girls and women in her community.







## This is Sofia's story.

*I am good at plaiting hair. I can plait any style you want...even dreadlocks. I got to know I am good at it because I would play with my mum's hair and she told me maybe I can do other people's hair. So I would do hairstyles and use all the cash I got in the same day or, I would spend some. Through BoxGirls I have learnt life skills. At BoxGirls, there was a class on entrepreneurship and savings. After attending the class, I decided to save the cash I make. I would plait hair and save. The savings helped. I was able to pay for my Saturday tuition and buy lunch. Before BoxGirls, I was not very serious. I was in all sorts of clubs and I was very curious. I found BoxGirls interesting and was chosen to be a leader. It felt good being in charge and I received two awards for being the best mini-coach and most inspirational girl.*

*I don't know what to say to BoxGirls because they also paid for my Form Four education. I had issues with some male teachers at some point and wanted to drop out of school. The male teachers wanted an affair and I refused. They started harassing me saying I was without manners. I shared the problem with BoxGirls who talked to the school and threatened to take the matter up with the human rights people and sue. I was at home on suspension but was called back to school. Going back was hard and the teachers would ignore me. My mother has really encouraged me since I joined BoxGirls. She has always believed in me. My dad did not want me to be involved but when he saw that I had received a scholarship, he turned around. I am a Muslim. A religious leader once came to tell mum that he had seen me wearing trousers during boxing and*





he was wondering if I was still a good Muslim. Mum told him that those are gender stereotypes and it does not affect my religion.

As a result of what I have done at BoxGirls, other Muslim girls in the community come to me to say that they want to learn life skills and boxing. I give them advice and when the situation is hard, I ask BoxGirls to help me."

**-Sofia Omar, BoxGirls Kenya**

