



Steering  
the Course   
Women's Sailing  
Festival

# Sail Africa Girls in Sailing

Case Study #3

sport / nature / technology



# Contents

Introduction	3
Aims of the project	4
How and why the project was started	5
Key successes	6
Changes or developments throughout the project	7
How others can get involved	8



# Introduction

Sail Africa is a non-profit public benefit organisation based in Durban, South Africa. The organisation is affiliated to the Point Yacht Club and is their development and transformation wing.

Sail Africa has a history of introducing disadvantaged township youth to the sport of sailing and to the maritime culture.

Through Sail Africa, numerous young people have:

- Sailed internationally
- Been named Sailor of the Year at the Royal Natal Yacht Club
- Skipped the Cape to Rio
- Been members of the winning provincial dinghy team
- Received provincial colours
- Entered the maritime profession as shipping and forwarding clerks
- Found berths as cadets and third mates
- Studied toward entering the maritime profession on vessels



# Aims of the project

Sail Africa's objectives are to:

- Grow the number of development sailors affecting sailing's transformation. We now see more young black sailors at events, challenging ratios.
- Access opportunities for youth development through sailing.
- Support the Government's National Development Plan by furthering the 'maritime culture.' Township youth have little access to the sea and no experience of handling boats; they are unaware of water safety. Sail Africa offers these experiences enabling access to maritime occupations. We run an effective maritime work readiness program.
- Grow the number of development girls sailing thus empowering them.

The program achieves this through four main projects:

- **School Sport:** hosting extra mural sailing with schools attending once a week.
- **Durban University Technology Program:** Sail Africa assisted with the formation of the Durban University of Technology Sailing Club.
- **Train to Compete Project.**
- **Train to Win Project.**





# How and why the project was started

2019 was the International Year of Women in Maritime. From here, we began a five-year program to encourage more girls into the sport and to encourage more girls to participate at regatta level.

We are now seeing more girls coming into the program through their schools and university maritime subjects. For safety, and as part of our empowerment program, we teach the girls to swim.



# Key successes

In 2019 our girls won an award from the 'Girls Only Project,' which was designed to encourage girls in sport.

## School Sport

In 2019 we increased girls participation in sailing by introducing our first all-girls school, Mowat Park High. In February 2020 they entered their first Sail Africa Interschool's Regatta where they were placed first in the EThekwini Maritime Cluster Trophy Division .

## Train to Win Project

Since September 2020 at the opening of the Durban Sailing Season, they have won three local trophies at the PYC; the Corona Cup, the Port Captain's Sprints (where they tied first overall on handicap), and the Sigma Series.

Skipper Nikki Henkeman (18) was placed first overall internationally in Bart's Bash 18 to 35 division, with the boat Ithemba being placed 3rd in PYC Bart's Bash.

## Access Opportunities

In 2019, as part of the Year of Women in Maritime, we sent five girls as guests of the Marine Inspirations Programme. These girls gave talks at the EThekwini Metro Economic Empowerment Conference and Exhibition, witnessed the operations of companies that service the maritime industry, and experienced navigation in the Mediterranean.

*Numerous girls in the projects have also completed their Level 1 Instructor Certificates.*

# Changes or developments throughout the project

Sail Africa has kept going through the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to offer numerous opportunities for young people to keep sailing. Because of the pandemic, opportunities for funding have reduced and the numbers of participants has been scaled down.

Our focus, however, remains on supporting the sailors, with two racing teams and The Mowat Park School returning to sail.



# How others can get involved

We would invite institutions to approach us – together we can work out a way forward.

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