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The Population Institute

Population Matters

[Breakaway During the World Cup](#)

June 23rd, 2010

This month marks the start of the World Cup, an international quadrennial competition for the world's most popular sport, soccer (which is known everywhere else in the world as football.) During the World Cup our partner organization [Population Media Center](#) (PMC), along with [Champlain College's Emergent Media Center](#) (EMC) in Vermont, will be launching the first three chapters of an electronic game called Breakaway, which uses the game of soccer to help combat violence against women.

According to [UNIFEM](#) (United Nations Development Fund for Women), up to 70% of women experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime, and among women 15-44 years old, acts of violence cause more death and disability than malaria, cancer, traffic accidents, and war combined. In South Africa, home of this year's World Cup, a woman is killed every 6 hours by an intimate partner. It's a violation of human rights that is deeply rooted in many cultures.

The game Breakaway combines fast-paced soccer with a narrative that encourages positive attitudes and behaviors in combating violence against women. The target audience is boys ages 8 to 15, and the reason is simple: attitudes toward women are formed at an early age. In promoting positive behaviors towards women, the game incorporates the UNFPA toolkit of culturally sensitive approaches, the Sabido approach to using entertainment to help change social norms, and Federation Internationale de Football (FIFA) "fair play" [rules](#).

Breakaway is designed to help shift beliefs, stereotypes, and attitudes on gender issues. In the game, players become a teen hoping to become a champion football player. The game features skill-based mini-games focused on defense, passing, handling, and shooting, along with narrative highlighting positive and negative role models in situations focusing on gender inequity and teamwork. As the game progresses the player is able to see the consequences of his decisions on and off the field.

The game, which is being designed and promoted with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), can be played online for free and CD's will be distributed to partners on the ground in South

Africa during the World Cup. Internationally known soccer star, Samuel Eto'o, striker for Football Club Internazionale Milano, is the spokesperson for Breakaway and will be a featured character in future episodes of the game.

Starting today you can play episodes 1-3 online at www.breakawaygame.com. So while you are enjoying the World Cup this summer, take time to pass this game along to the boys and young men in your life. As Nelson Mandela once said "education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world."

Posted by Emily Pontarelli, Program Associate

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