

Siyakha Girls Pilot Project

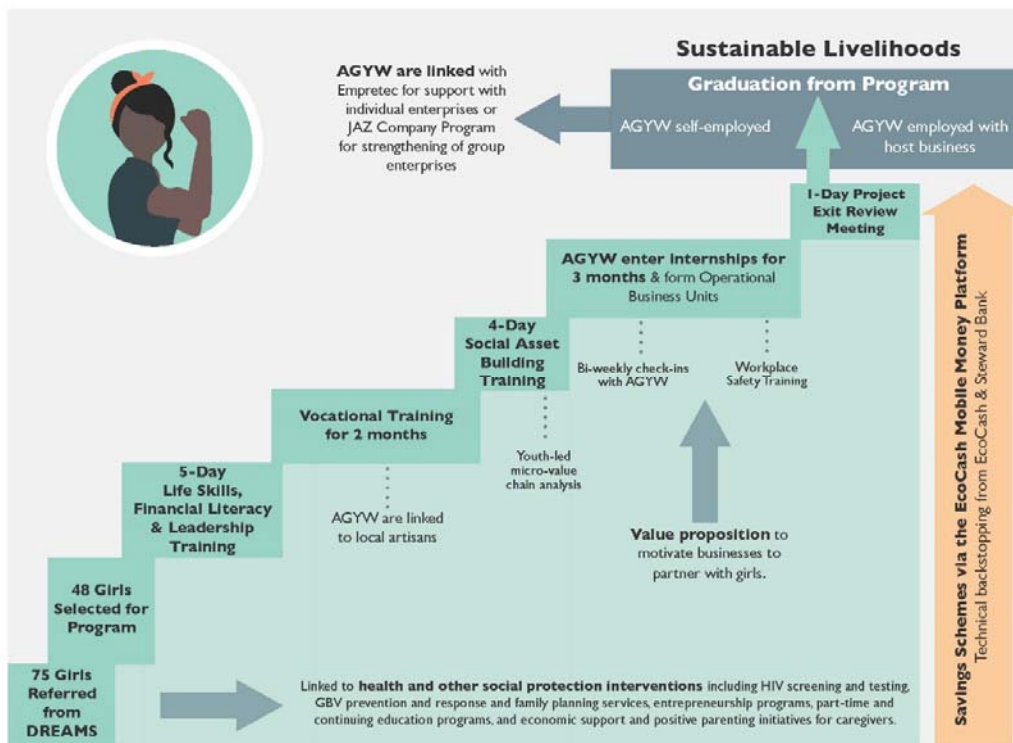
Developing the Evidence Base for Comprehensive Workforce Readiness

When adolescent girls and young women drop out of the formal education system and lack workforce skills and early professional experience, their livelihood prospects are minimal. These economic constraints heighten vulnerability to a range of risks, including sexual and gender-based violence, early marriage, and HIV/AIDS.

In response to these challenges, the Bantwana Initiative of World Education, Inc. (WEI/B) implemented the nine-month Siyakha Girls pilot project to demonstrate how a comprehensive approach to workforce readiness with layered health and social protection services can improve employment prospects and reduce vulnerability of adolescent girls and young women. Funded by USAID through the FHI 360-managed Accelerating Strategies for Practical Innovation and Research in Economic Strengthening (ASPIRES) project, the pilot drew from the findings of the 2018 Zimbabwe Market Economic Opportunity Analysis to ensure that participants developed in-demand, marketable skills and were introduced to sectors with growth potential in the local economy of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

ZEMOA findings	Pilot design
Due to limited education completion rates, AGYW face livelihood challenges and are increasingly vulnerable to a range of socioeconomic risks	Pilot selection targeted young women ages 18-24: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with HIV/GBV vulnerabilities • from economically vulnerable urban households • who did not complete or failed secondary education
AGYW need a combination of skills to increase their employment options	A range of employability skills were built into the program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundational (life skills and financial literacy) • Technical (vocational) • Soft (work readiness and social assets)
Economic opportunities for AGYW exist within localized microeconomic value chains	Micro-value chain analysis identified entry points and niche areas for youth participation in three high-growth sectors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • auto-mechanics • textile-manufacturing • leather-working
Comprehensive livelihood support for AGYW should integrate health, social, job matching, and value chain support	The pilot used a layered approach to improving the girls' livelihood prospects as well as their health and protective assets.

Phasing and Layering of Project Interventions and Inputs



Activities and Achievements

Activity	Outputs, Outcomes
1. Application and selection process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The multi-layered selection and profiling process was used to enroll beneficiaries based on established criteria and advance and retain a cohort through each stage. The process included review of personal CVs and application letters, administration of an HIV/GBV risk tool, home visits, signing of a social contract with caregivers and male partners, and assessment of girls' aptitude and interest in the selected industry.
2. Life skills, job preparation, and financial literacy training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 61 young women participated in the five-day foundational training. Based on their engagement and aptitude, 48 young women were selected to continue onto vocational training and internships. Participants reported that the skills obtained in self-leadership, grooming, self-esteem, and communication within a team proved very useful during their internships.
3. Vocational courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 48 young women were supported to enroll in and complete two-month vocational courses at the Bulawayo Projects Centre. The project reviewed and tailored the curricula to ensure relevance and practicality. Participants developed essential knowledge and skills and hands-on experience within their chosen industries: 19 in textiles, 10 in leatherworks, and 19 in auto-mechanics.
4. Micro-value chain mapping and social asset building training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants mapped 52 companies, as well as current opportunities and skills in demand for entry in each of their chosen industries during the four-day training at the outset of their internships. Participants reported that knowledge and skills to deal with sexual and other harassment were helpful during interactions with employees and customers.
5. Internships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 47 of 48 participants completed eleven-week internships at 30 host companies. 96% of interns strongly agree that the skills acquired from the trainings and internship have prepared them for the job market and making a living in the future.
6. Financial savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All participants were trained in financial literacy and have been successfully saving on their own over the life of the project, while 28 women also opted to save in groups. Participants mentioned savings as one of their top benefits from the program, which enabled them to augment their income through small side trading activities or to purchase start-up equipment such as sewing machines to establish their own businesses.

By the end of the project, participants reported improved economic prospects:

- Seven (14.5%) were employed full-time where they had interned
- Four (8.3%) had extended their internships
- Thirteen (27%) were starting their own businesses
- Another twelve (25%) were actively seeking employment.



Ntombikayise Nkiwane
Age 24
Married with 2-year-old
Leather-working



Phindile Gumbi
Age 23
Never sat for O' level exams
Textile-manufacturing



Lungile Lunga
Age 21
Did not collect O' level results
Auto-mechanics

Challenges during Pilot

- Time and resource constraints during pilot
- Necessity of shortening vocational training courses
- Under-resourced, un-modernized training centres
- Limited understanding of the concept of internships of host companies
- Negative gender norms in society in general (among the girls themselves) and in male-dominated economic sectors such as auto-mechanics
- Broader macro-economic challenges (power outages, low purchasing power, seasonal demand)

Implications for Scale-Up

- Design program for minimum of 18 to 24 months
- Build in longer length for vocational training courses
- Involve vocational trainers and host companies earlier in the process
- Improve value proposition to host companies for internship program, such as offering insurance, compensation, etc.
- Engage pilot program graduates and host companies to help market the program and recruit candidates
- Pursue links with financial services providers (for start-up capital, etc.)