

## Siyakha Girls Pilot Project in Mozambique

### *Voices of Young Women Engaged in the Comprehensive Workforce Readiness Program*



The **Siyakha Girls initiative** is a comprehensive economic strengthening framework to support vulnerable adolescent girls and young women developed by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education (WEI/B), to support vulnerable adolescent girls and young women. The model targets 15 - 24 year-olds with a package of foundational, soft, and technical skills development combined with practical internships and mentorship, and integrates health knowledge and financial literacy to inculcate a culture of savings and asset-building. The model is premised on the theory of change that the right set of skills and supports—tailored for and built on the active engagement of AGYW, their families or partners, and local employers or business mentors—yield positive results even in a highly informal or constrained economy.

As of 2022, WEI/B was supporting locally adapted replication of Siyakha in five countries in East and Southern Africa. **In Mozambique**, WEI/B has worked with local NGO partner ANDA to adapt and pilot Siyakha Girls within the PEPFAR-DREAMS program portfolio, in Chimoio, Manica Province. **Successfully engaging 220 AGYW, the Siyakha pilot** presented a life-changing opportunity that opened viable livelihood avenues, while also strengthening their knowledge, confidence, and ability to safeguard their health and well-being.

### **In Their Own Words**

“My life has changed significantly,” says Gilda, a 24-year old single mother. “I learned a great deal through my involvement in Siyakha and participation in the vocational trainings.”

Like many other Siyakha participants, Gilda previously had little-to-no knowledge of gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence. Today, she is not only able to identify GBV, but has the necessary capacity to confront, avoid, and report sexual harassment and violence.



Moreover, Gilda is highly motivated by the vocational education, training, and professional internship facilitated by Siyakha, which allowed her to learn about horticulture and poultry and hog farming. These are all aligned to potential employment opportunities in the agro-based area where she lives. Gilda believes that her Siyakha learning and experience will go a long way in helping better her life -- and serving as a positive role model for other vulnerable young women. A family member echoes this: s “[We are] so happy with the positive changes that we have witnessed in Gilda’s life over these past few months as she participated in this program.”

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A petite and slight 22-year-old, **Fátima** is already married -- and a mother of two children. Her home life and physical well-being were greatly impacted by Siyakha's foundational and soft skills, which helped her realize that she was in an abusive relationship -- and could actually do something about it. This led her to discuss her situation with the program mentor, from whom "I received a great deal of support," Fátima says.



Feeling more empowered, she confronted her husband about gender-based violence. "Whenever my husband tried to rape me I would immediately tell him that [rape] is violence and a crime and that if [he] persisted, I would report him to the police."

During this time, Fátima also completed a Siyakha-facilitated poultry farming course, and was able to participate in a follow-on internship, where learned additional skills in bird-handling and managing a poultry business. "I am applying everything that I learned in the training," she says, "and now am also learning to plow, sell chickens and potatoes, and grow corn and cabbage."

Fátima is thankful for Siyakha's transformational impact on her life. She feels financially and personally empowered, and hopes the program will continue to support and change the lives of other vulnerable young women in her community. In her own words, "All the knowledge that I have acquired is changing my life. Now my husband and I do not fight like we used to."

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Among the youngest Siyakha beneficiaries is 16-year-old **Lorena**, who lives with her siblings and unemployed parents. Like other vulnerable participants, Lorena became involved with Siyakha Girls after enrolling in a local DREAMS club in her area. Through her participation in DREAMS and Siyakha, she has learned a great deal about GBV, HIV/AIDS prevention, and sexual and reproductive health.

The most impactful aspect of the project for Lorena has been financial literacy, which, in her words, "allows me to earn, to save money, obtain a source of income, and save my earnings to pay for my studies."

Today, Lorena has completed her Siyakha internship and plans to start her own business. Using her newly acquired knowledge and technical skills, she has secured a loan and will receive project support to further refine her business plan. Her experience with Siyakha has also inspired Lorena to help her parents profit from poultry farming. The takeaway lesson from her Siyakha experience and her personal advice to other young women like herself is to always remember the following: "I can, it is possible, and I am capable!"

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Twenty-four-year-old Lucia lives with her husband, child, and in-laws, just outside Chimoio town. The family had experienced significant economic hardship, struggling to feed and support themselves. Therefore, in early 2021, Lucia decided to participate in Siyakha.

Upon joining, “I had training on [preventing] domestic violence and sexual harassment that has enabled me to become a confident woman!” Lucia says. “And I benefited so much from the courses on financial literacy and asset building, which are extremely useful in running my new business.”

Using skills gained from her Siyakha participation, Lucia assessed the market and determined that there was an opportunity for success in running a small roadside business in her neighborhood. Applying her financial literacy training, she developed a business plan in early 2022, and became eligible to receive a small starter-kit to help launch her business—a kiosk that sells basic household necessities and popular commodities in smaller, more affordable units. Only a few months into her small business venture, Lucia is already working on a plan to expand her business -- and has recruited her nephew to help out in the shop.

“My current success and ability to adapt my business model to the needs of the community was only possible through involvement in Siyakha, where I was able to strengthen my understanding and knowledge of financial literacy and entrepreneurship,” Lucia says. Like other Siyakha beneficiaries in Chimoio, she is extremely grateful to ANDA, World Education, and USAID for “the opportunity to improve my life and pursue a more secure future for me and my family.”

