



Girls in the Siyakha program have entered vocational training in non-traditional trades such as carpentry (left) and welding (right).

Bantwana Siyakha Girls - Ana Patsogolo, Malawi

Market-driven, holistic economic empowerment for adolescent girls and young women in DREAMS

When a girl drops out of secondary school, her life changes radically. Her livelihood prospects diminish, and she becomes more vulnerable to poverty, exclusion, violence, and associated health risks such as HIV and STIs. If she has dropped out because of pregnancy, her challenges are further compounded by social stigma and the pressures of supporting a young child.

Economic empowerment of adolescent girls and young women is now widely recognized to be a key component of comprehensive HIV prevention and response, as a way to promote agency and rebalance gendered power dynamics. However, work-readiness and enterprise programs have struggled to identify the ideal combination of skills and strategies to retain and mainstream young people with limited schooling and experience into local economies.

The **Bantwana Siyakha Girls Model** is a comprehensive, phased approach to overcoming these challenges and successfully developing the workforce readiness of adolescent girls and young women in vulnerable situations.

Developed by the Bantwana Initiative of World Education (WEI/Bantwana), *Siyakha Girls* combines foundational “soft” skills (such as self-awareness, communication, goal setting, violence prevention), and “hard” or technical skills with practical internships and mentorship to trigger the levers that accelerate economic resilience, health, and well-being.

In Malawi, the **Ana Patsogolo Activity (APA)** implemented by WEI/Bantwana incorporates *Siyakha Girls* as an integral part of an **enhanced youth economic strengthening package** for PEPFAR DREAMS programming.

Enhanced Youth Economic Strengthening for DREAMS

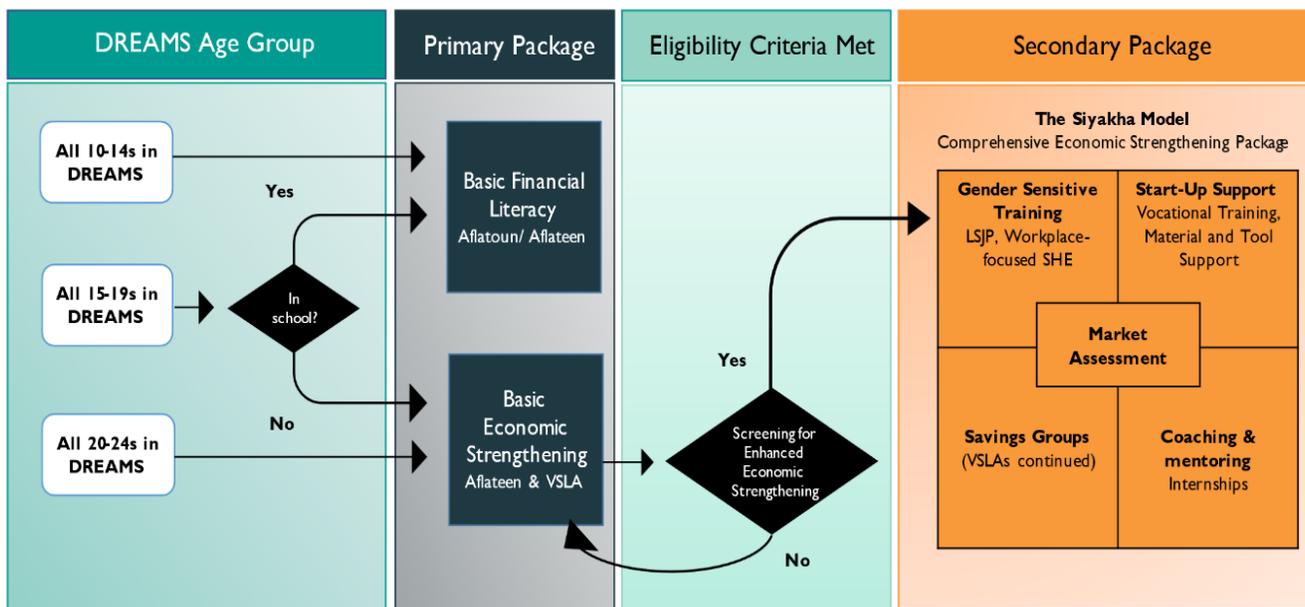
WEI/Bantwana’s comprehensive approach to economic strengthening under APA seeks to:

- ⇒ Bolster HIV prevention by decreasing young women’s reliance on transactional sex
- ⇒ Strengthen their self-efficacy, independence, and decision-making
- ⇒ Serve as a bridge to wage employment or self-employment pathways for AGYW

In addition to *Bantwana’s Siyakha Model*, APA’s enhanced package includes targeted content and strategies, namely: financial literacy for youth (using *Aflatoun* and *Aflateen* modules); voluntary savings and lending associations (VSLAs) for *Siyakha* AGYW who are able to be employed and earn income; and locally based skills training in collaboration with rural community development agents and artisans. To support girls who are too young to engage in technical training or internships (i.e. the 10 - 14 age band), their caregivers are linked to VSLAs to improve household financial stability.

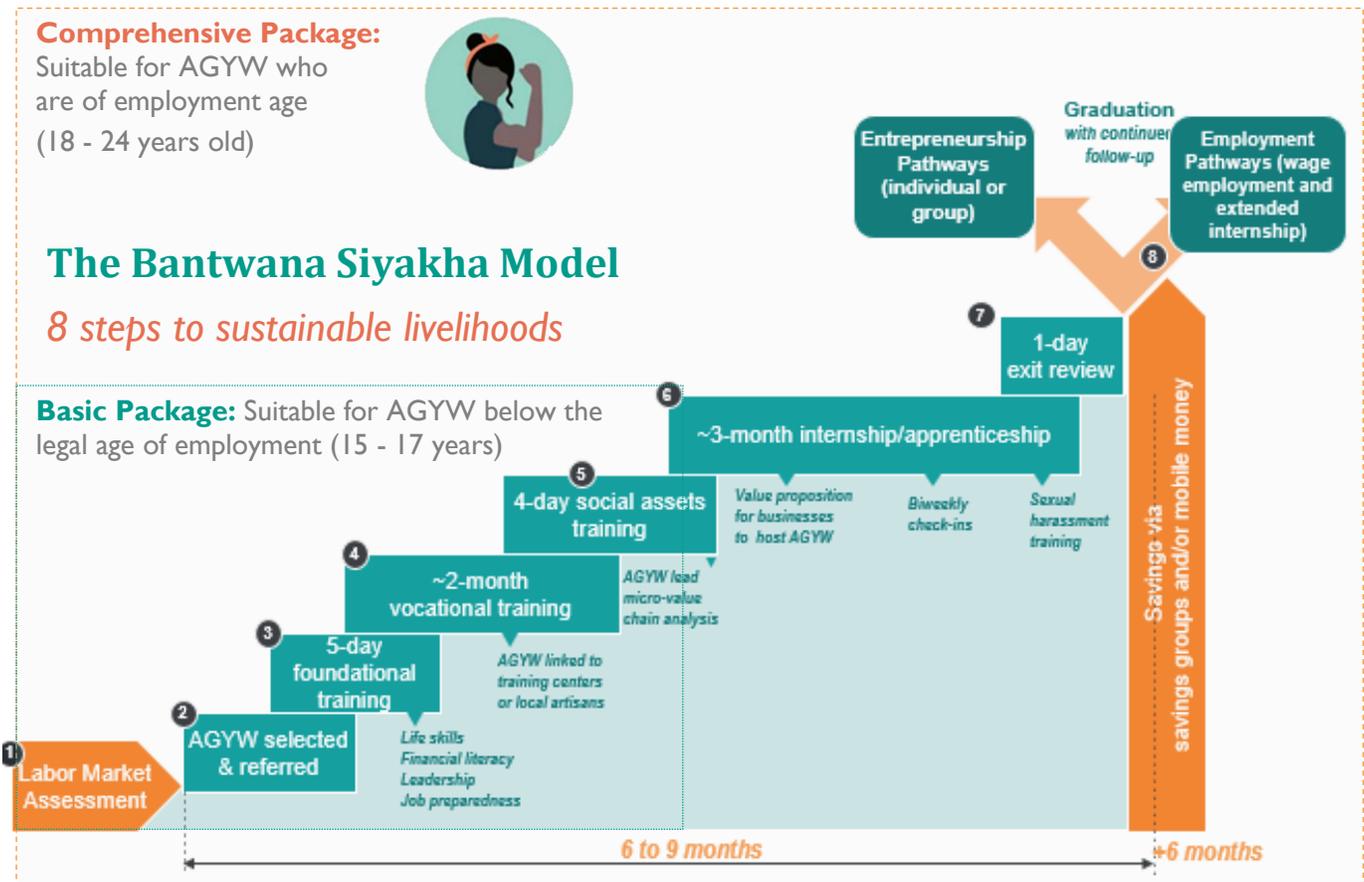
The progression diagram below illustrates how APA’s youth economic strengthening packages are delivered according to age and school-going status:

- 10- to 14-year-olds receive basic financial literacy, but are not moved into savings groups or full-time work readiness. (For this age group, APA links their caregivers to VSLAs to improve household financial stability.)
- VSLAs begin in the 15-19 age group and continue into the 20-24 age group.
- Training on specific marketable skills, entrepreneurship, savings, and bridges to employment—through *Bantwana Siyakha*—begin in the 15-19 age group and continue into the 20-24 age group.



Rolling Out *Bantwana Siyakha* under Ana Patsogolo

APA launched Siyakha in Malawi in 2021, with the first cohort of 482 girls starting that year and a second cohort of 550 beginning in 2022—for a total of 1,032 AGYW enrolled in Siyakha to date (as of March 2022). As the diagram below indicates, girls below 18 participate in the “basic package” (up to Step 5), while those of legal employment age are eligible to complete the comprehensive package through Step 8.



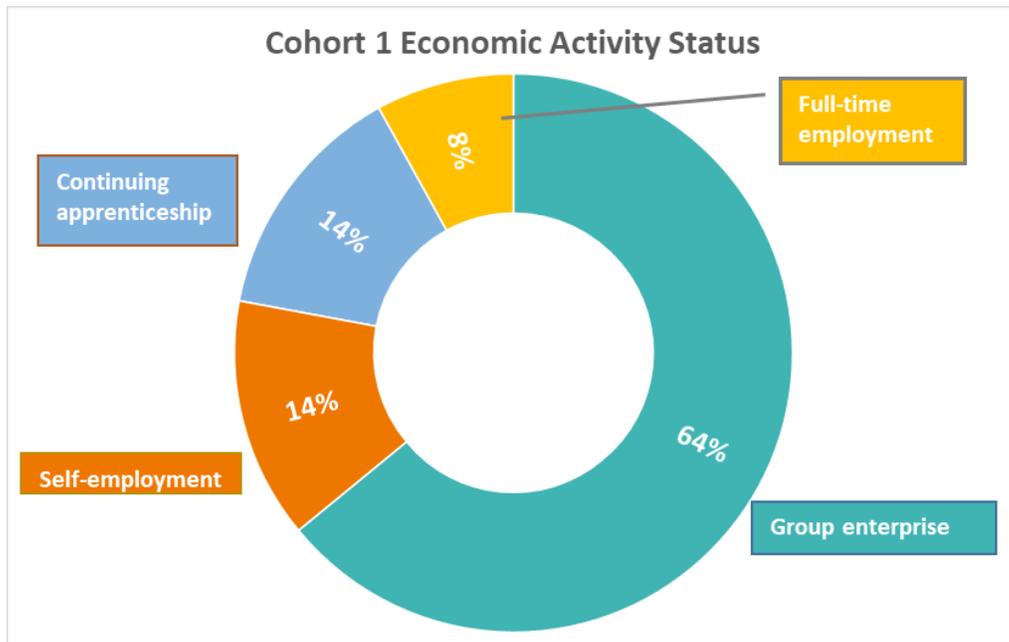
As a first step, APA conducted a local labor market assessment (LMA) in each DREAMS implementing district in southern Malawi—Blantyre, Machinga, and Zomba. The exercise was conducted in two phases. The initial phase identified local sectors of growth that would offer opportunities for AGYW to earn a livelihood. The second phase entailed a deeper value chain analysis into those sectors to determine entry points for AGYW along the value chain, including vocational training requirements needed to break into that sector. The labor market assessment was updated for the second cohort in 2022 by conducting validation meetings with community development agents and private sector actors to identify additional sub-sectors of high demand (within the original sectors identified in the first phase of the labor market assessment) that could serve as additional entry points for adolescent girls and young women with a particular focus on sub-sectors that are traditionally male dominated.

- High-growth, high-opportunity sub-sectors identified by LMA**
- Smart agriculture/agri-processing
 - Carpentry and joinery
 - Clothing and textiles
 - Cosmetology
 - Hospitality and tourism
 - Motorcycle repairs
 - Refrigeration/air conditioning repairs
 - Videography and production
 - Welding and fabrication

Participant Skill-building & Employment Pathways

Siyakha Cohort 1

A total of 482 AGYW completed Siyakha in 2021, of which **232 completed the Siyakha basic package** and **250 completed the Siyakha comprehensive package**. The chart below shows the economic activity status of the 250 AGYW who completed Siyakha comprehensive in 2021. The AGYW who are continuing with extended apprenticeships are in the sectors of solar panel installation, welding, tailoring, and tourism.



“The skills I gained from the [Siyakha] training will help me realize my dream of owning a restaurant someday. I am currently saving money from my salary to enrol for a diploma qualification.”

A Stepping Stone to Bigger Dreams

Pemphero Makawa, 19, participated in the first cohort of Siyakha vocational training and chose the course in Tourism and Hospitality.

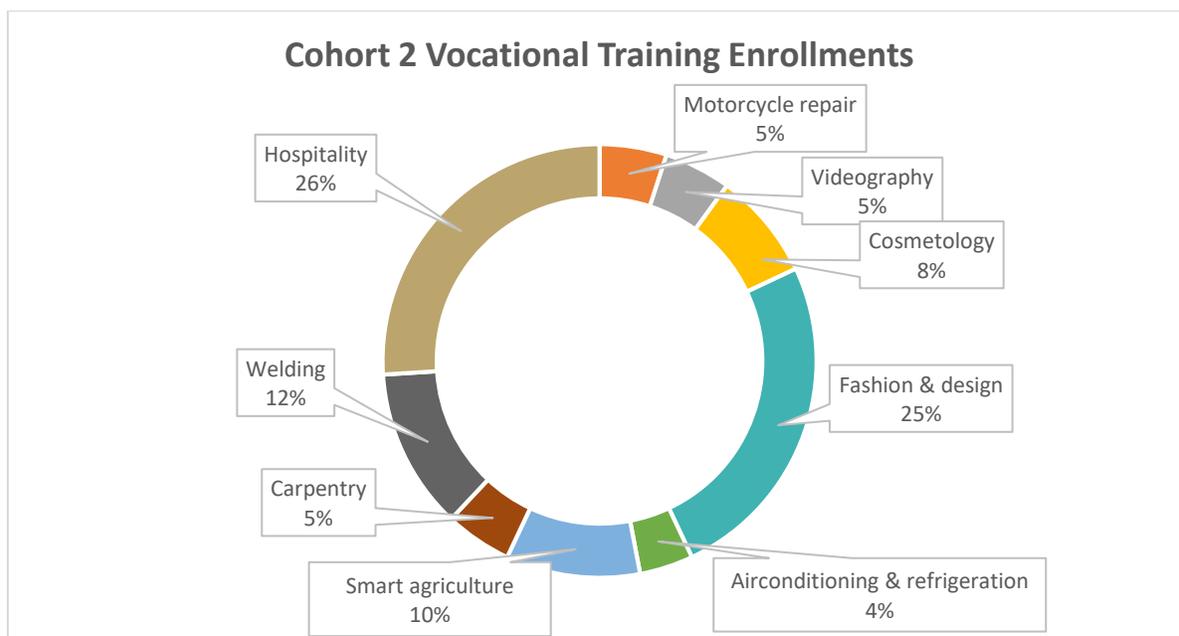
Upon completing her three-month training, she was placed in a two-month internship at Steers, part of a South African restaurant chain in Zomba, Malawi. Finding her performance to be outstanding, the Steers management offered Pemphero full-time employment after she completed her internship.

Now, like the other newly empowered Siyakha graduates, Pemphero’s ambitions are blossoming—she dreams of owning her own restaurant someday. As a step toward that goal, she intends to upgrade from the vocational training certificate she earned through Siyakha to a diploma level qualification, which she believes will help her reach the next rung on her career ladder.

Siyakha Cohort 2

From the second 2022 cohort of 550 AGYW, 100% have completed the foundational training. Of those:

- 300 are completing vocational training courses linked to the labor market assessment and vetted by APA;
- And 250 are completing various community-based skills training courses which APA linked them to through local artisans and government extension workers.



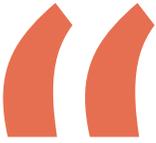
To create additional economic opportunities for Siyakha graduates, APA is exploring linkages with the Youth Business Incubation Program supported by USAID Malawi, as well as linking entrepreneurship groups to supply VLS+ kits, screen printing, and catering services. APA is also linking Siyakha graduates to a community health worker training program offered by the PEPFAR-funded HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) Global Health Consortium.

“Learning about tailoring has helped me to be self-reliant financially. I am able to take care of my needs and those of my relatives.”

- Ainafe, 24

Ainafe completed a 3-month training in tailoring and is currently running a business with 5 other girls, following receipt of an APA start-up kit (two sewing machines, accessories, and fabric).





“With Siyakha, I have gained welding skills that enable me to earn a living. Also, I have made friends through Siyakha, as we are running our business as a group—and I cherish this experience.”

- Joyce, 22 (left)

hallmarks of Bantwana’s Siyakha Model



- ✓ **Contextualized life skills, business, and technical training** tailored to **local economic opportunities** identified through a structured **Labour Market Assessment**
- ✓ **Sequenced design and milestones** that mirror the “world of work”
- ✓ **Participants equipped to actively explore sector value chains** and identify viable economic entry points
- ✓ **‘Social contracts’** created with girls’ families and partners/spouses to support full participation and program retention
- ✓ **Mentored apprenticeships or internships** with local employers and artisans to build practical skills and workplace competencies
- ✓ **Ongoing orientation and vetting of training providers and employers** to ensure safeguarding, quality, and accountability
- ✓ **Start-up support and mentorship** for both entrepreneurial and employment pathways

The Ana Patsogolo (Children First) Activity is a five-year PEPFAR and USAID-funded project led by the **Bantwana Initiative of World Education Inc.** (WEI/Bantwana) and implemented by four Malawian NGOs in eight HIV high-burden districts in southern Malawi. APA delivers Siyakha through DREAMS programming in three districts (Blantyre, Machinga, and Zomba).

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