

# Nielimishe Nijisaidie!

Experiences of a community based apprenticeship programme for young women in Kilifi, Kenya  
July – December 2014



*In 2014, Moving the Goalposts (MTG) applied for a grant from The Youth-to-Youth (Y2Y) Fund, a grant scheme for youth-led organizations with innovative ideas for youth entrepreneurship development from the International Labour Organization, through USTADI Foundation. MTG submitted and was awarded the “Community Based Apprenticeship Program for Entrepreneurship Development” also called the “Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project”. The implementation period was July – December 2014.*

Moving the Goalposts Kilifi (MTG) ([www.mtgk.org](http://www.mtgk.org)) is an innovative community based organization that uses football as a unique entry point to engage girls in reproductive health and rights sessions, leadership and economic empowerment initiatives. MTG works with over 5000 vulnerable girls and young women and their communities in Kilifi and Kwale counties.



## Why the “Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project”?

The Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project has been implemented in Kilifi County. The County has an illiteracy level of 12%. 28% of the adult population living in Kilifi have completed primary school with 17% of them also completing secondary school Kenya Cast Survey, 2013, Ipsos Public Affairs). A baseline survey carried out in 2012 by MTG revealed that 56% of the girls who were interviewed had not completed their primary school education. 18.4% of the girls had not gone to school at all. Respondents in the Ipsos Kenya Coast Survey 2013 rated as the major development deficits in their locality respectively employment, health services and education.

In the period 2012 – 2014, MTG has implemented the Pathways programme through International Inspiration (formerly International Development through Sport) with funding from Comic Relief. The Pathways programme aimed at supporting girls to re-engage with the education system, gain vocational skills and /or manage their own businesses alongside developing their leadership skills through football and improving their access to reproductive health information.

One of the major lessons learnt in this project was that football, and in particular the MTG football leagues, provides an opportunity for girls who are out of school to come together and take steps – enter a Pathway - in the process of becoming financially independent. One hundred and fifty young women participated in savings groups, financial literacy trainings and entrepreneurship trainings. Thirty three of them started their own businesses. MTG facilitated trainings in bead making, soap making, eco skills (making objects from polythene bags or door mats from pieces of unused cloth). Thirty five young women followed vocational training in institutions.

However, although the young women were trained in business skills and/or vocational skills, they were not able to access capital to start their businesses and buy tools that they need for their business as one Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project participant said: “My competitors have the tools that I don't have. I lack the tools and skills for the hair styles that my clients want. One of my customers wanted to be plaited the new Abuja plaiting skill which I'm yet to learn. It is hard because my work cannot meet the standards.”

Another project participants shared the challenges that she faces as a young worker: “ ... a client comes with his car and he wants the breaks to be repaired. I can take a spanner to repair the breaks then I break it. This becomes a problem because I have to pay for the broken part and then repair the brakes. Another challenge is that you repair someone's car. Then they will tell you that they will pay

USTADI Foundation ([www.ustadi.org](http://www.ustadi.org)), is a registered independent organization under the Kenyan law.

USTADI is an initiative of the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS) and a consortium of other 'thought leaders' intended to create a market embedded capacity development facility as a means to support localization and sustainability of capacity development services in Kenya. USTADI is part of a global network of local capacity development facility initiatives.

later and they never come back. It happens that after repairs, a person goes for a test drive before they pay you and they disappear completely without paying.”

The expectations were high for the training programme, although: “I expect that through the programme my skills will improve. But then after the training I still don't have the required cosmetics. I may have to borrow a loan from the savings group that I am part of. But I'm afraid of taking a loan from our savings group.”



Fatuma Kahindi, in MTG since 2008, is one of the Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project” participants. For her apprenticeship she was placed at Samuel Garage in Kilifi town. “I have always loved mechanics and my dream came true when I joined a mechanics college with support from Moving The Goalposts. I am the bread winner from a family of 12, including my mother and my siblings. After my training, it was difficult to get a job as a mechanic. The people I approached felt that I could not do the job well. I had to survive, so I started selling charcoal for a living. But, that has no future. Almost all the trees in my village have been cut. I also worked as a waiter in one of the cafeterias in Kilifi during weekends and I set up motorbike repair center to perfect my mechanic skills. Joining a good garage will give me to perfect my skills and increase my confidence. I'm unique because I am the only woman working with ten men. They support me to learn everything in the field of mechanics. Whenever they get jobs outside the garage, they request me to accompany them. This has helped me to learn that business is very dynamic.”

*Samuel was approached by MTG to be Fatuma Kahindi's mentor. At first Samuel was hesitant because he feared that the male mechanics in his garage would take her not serious or would start a relationship with Fatuma. His biggest fear was that Fatuma would not make it as a mechanic in the real world. Samuel admits happily that his fears were proven wrong. Fatuma focused on her work in the garage and she managed to learn all that she wanted to learn. "This MTG project has helped me to understand that women can do what men can do. I was shocked to see Fatuma get a Probox (car) back to life. I know now why MTG slogan is TUNAWEZA (I am able in Kiswahili). I urge the community to encourage, motivate and support girls to explore their potential and pursue courses of their interest. Fatuma was the first female mechanic to work in my garage. I think she is the only female mechanic in Kilifi and I'm proud of that."*

## How the "Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project" was implemented

The aim of the "Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project" was to enable the young women to take up employment or create employment for themselves and, in the future, mentor MTG girls who are following the same "Pathway". As part of the programme, the young women would also be linked to financial institutions. MTG identified twenty-three young women in the age of 18 – 23 years who had been trained in entrepreneurial skills and/or vocational skills. The young women were registered as MTG players and participated actively in MTG's activities in their community. They played football, attended peer education sessions and some of them were members of the MTG field savings groups for out of school girls. The project participants started with a training on how to generate business ideas, how to start and improve their business, customer relations, marketing and promotion based on the LO Generate-Your-Business-Idea model, a model developed by the International Labour Organization for potential entrepreneurs who want to develop a feasible business idea.

Nineteen project participants were placed in community apprenticeship placements with successful business people in Kwale and Kilifi Counties. Ten young women did their internship in hair dressing salons, eight in tailoring shops and one in mechanical engineering. Their mentors helped them not only to improve their technical skills but also to overcome the fears and challenges that the participants mentioned at the beginning of the project. The young women came together once per month in the MTG monthly leadership building sessions where they could share their experiences, celebrate their successes and support each other.

Of course there were challenges!

Some project participants had to step in and assist their families during the apprenticeship program. They had to look after sick family members or had to assist with household duties while their parents were away. Although parents and husbands were informed and involved before the beginning of the project, some family members had unrealistic expectations and thought that the young women were being paid monthly salaries. Family members approached the young women for support with requests to support them with food and/or paying school fees for their siblings.

For most of the mentors it was the first time that they mentored young professionals. They were not used to a formal approach where detailed plans had to be made. They found it difficult to develop their mentorship which slowed down some of the activities. And again, although the mentors were informed and involved from the start, they expected that MTG would pay them for the services offered to their mentees.

Although the mentors were carefully selected and prepared there were some challenges in the work place where mentees felt not respected by employees in the work place or where mentees felt that they had to work longer/harder. Especially in the tailoring shops/colleges it happened that there were not enough materials for the mentees to work with. But in general, the mentors were dedicated and willing to tackle the challenges.

Jane Sulubu was placed at Joy saloon in Kilifi town. She wanted to improve her knowledge on hairdressing and beauty therapy. Jane's clients in the village were school girls and her friends. She had no experience with a different class of clientele. During the first days of her apprenticeship she was quiet and too shy to speak which made it very difficult for her mentor to assign her well established clients. One day she was she manicured a client. When the client was not satisfied she asked Jane to redo it. Jane showed that she was not happy with this request. This was an opening for the mentor for a discussion with Jane about customer satisfaction. Jane opened up during the discussion and showed that she was open to new ideas. She implemented what she learnt from her mentor back into her saloon in her village. This helped Jane to get more clients in her saloon. As a result she has now two girls support her in her business.



**Mama Comfort, from Mumbros Investments, welcomed two girls to mentor them in tailoring and business skills. "The project brought me in contact with two different girls from different backgrounds. In the process of working with them I learned from them and managed to live with them. I did my best to ensure that the girls would benefit fully from my skills. Besides tailoring skills I have also given them decoration skills. But most of all I taught them to plan for their work through the work plan that was developed with support from MTG to guide them through the process. I'm ready to mentor other girls. I know how it works. I will not have problems developing the mentorship plan"**



## The impact of the Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project

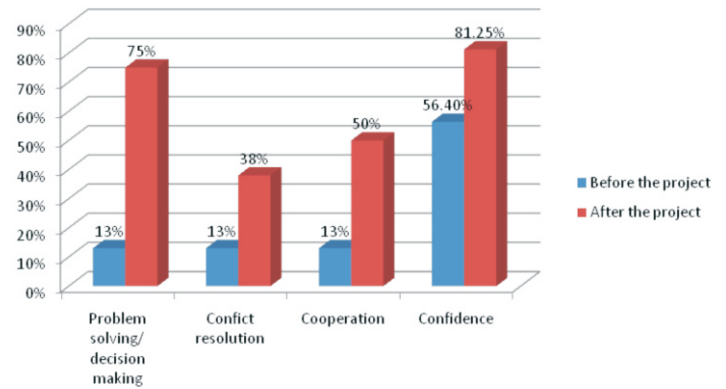
A baseline carried out at the beginning of the project showed that 13 to 27% of the young women rated their skills and knowledge in entrepreneurship as very poor. They said they didn't know how to negotiate with customers, they didn't know how much capital they needed for their business and how to get this capital. They didn't know how to meet the market needs and how to price their products or services. By the end of the project between the 62,5% and 75% considered themselves as good or even very good in business skills and knowledge.

Most of the young women also said that the project had improved their life skills that relate to doing business and/or work as professionals such as decision making and problem solving skills, conflict resolution, cooperation skills and confidence

**Business skills and knowledge**



**Life skills**



By the end of the project two participants had started their own businesses in tailoring and dress making. Five young women had secured employment: three in hairdressing and two in tailoring.

Twelve young women opened a bank account.

“I was afraid of taking a loan from our savings group but recently I got information about the Kenya Women Finance Trust. Initially I didn't like the idea because I thought that if you don't pay your loan they will take your items away. But then someone explained it to me and I started liking it because someone properly described it to me”.

The local business people who acted as mentors reported that the project was a real “win- win situation”. The beneficiaries enhanced their skills and with a pair of extra hands the local business persons could serve more customers: “I was happy to see that the girls got more skills. I had customers who only wanted to be served by my mentee, Sada. This December holiday I made more profit than the year before,” said Mama Ivy, saloon owner in Mnarani.



Families and community members have started appreciating the growth of the young women. Young women tell stories about family and community members who come to them for advice and financial assistance:

“In the village where I stay people respect me. There's even a woman who asked me: “Jane, what did you do, you said you could not plait hair? People now come to me when they want financial assistance. If am able I always assist.”

“Because of me, my sibling got a sponsor. She gained interest in what I do and she is now doing the same course which I did. When anything happens at home, my mother tells me first, even if I am not the first born. She recognises that I have been a big help to her and the community. People take me as a different person. I am even consulted on different issues.

### What MTG has learned from the “Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project”

#### **Impact of a mentorship programme**

Although the project period has been relatively short, MTG has learnt a number of lessons. One of the lessons learnt is that a mentorship program like the “Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project” helps the young women to improve their business- and life skills and that the project has increased their confidence and status in their family and/or community.

Although the mentors were carefully selected, not all had the capacity to work with the mentees e.g. lack of materials and experience in using work plans. The formal approach with the signing of agreements, writing work plans and designing indicators to measure the success of their mentorship will make the mentors more involved, responsible and focused on achieving the objectives of the project. Even though the mentors were not used to working in a formal way, the writing of work plans and targets motivated them to work hard in ensuring that the beneficiaries, the organization and the mentors themselves achieve their goals and objectives for the project.

#### **Mentor workshops**

It is crucial to organize mentor workshops. These workshops should be held not only to make work plans, but also to manage the relations and expectations between the mentors, mentees and MTG. The working relationship between mentor and mentee is probably the most important tool that contributes to the success of the programme.

#### **Support from parents and husbands**

Sensitization workshops with parents and husbands have to remain part of the programme. Their cooperation is essential. Young women in an apprenticeship need support and can't interrupt their apprenticeship because of household chores or the care of sick family members.

#### **Linkages with financial institutions**

Creation of linkages with financial institutions for financial and business support as a sustainability strategy is crucial. Twelve of the young women opened bank accounts during a meeting between four financial service providers and the Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project” participants.





## MTG's out of school girls after the "Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project"

MTG strongly believes that the Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project approach could be a succesful "Pathway" for future MTG's out of school girls. It is obvious that a project of three months can't change all the girls' lives. In order to measure the impact MTG needs to continue following the girls. How will the young women settle in their employment? How can MTG assist the girls who have not gained employment? How can MTG work with the parents so that they can give their daughters the support that they were planning to give? Do the young women, as a result of MTG's interventions, access financial institutions and available funds?

It is clear that the end of the Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project doesn't mean the end of this approach/Pathway. MTG is determined to look for new opportunities to implement the lessons learnt and give more out of school MTG girls a chance to (as one of the young women said) "become who she wants to be".

Mwanahamisi joined the MTG league in 2014. Mwanahamisi was determined to be part of the USTADI project. She faced challenges because she had to take care off...? and she lacked hairdressing skills. Mwanahamis also has a visible skin condition. Mentors were afraid that they or their clients would be infected. The MTG/USTADI project officer had to the saloonists to give Mwanahamisi a chance. When she managed it were the clients who also needed to be convinced. Some clients said bluntly that Mwanahamisi should not attend to them. The mentor and Mwanahamisi felt bad and the MTG/USTADI project officer visited them regularly to encourage them. Eventually Mwanahamisi convinced her clients with her skills and attitude. By the end of the placement Mwanahamisi's queue and waiting list was the longest. Clients wanted Mwanahamisi to attend to them. Mwanahamisi's story shows that it's someone's skills and attitude that beats stigmatization.

Mwanahamisi's placement has become the most successful placement. Mwanahamisi's life has changed. She no longer covers her body to hide growth on her skin. Her increased confidence has made her a good leader at her football field and in the community.



This group of Nielimishe Nijisaidie Project participants will meet once per month during the monthly MTG capacity building meetings. During the meetings the young women can share ideas, successes and help each other to solve the challenges that they will face in the new phase in their lives

