

Entry for GIZ Gender Competition 2024

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Employment and Skills for Development in Africa (E4D)/Employment Promotion for Women
for the Green Transformation in Africa (WE4D)- OE 1700

Jenga Wanawake Kwa Ufundi- (Build Women's Skills in Construction) – Kenya

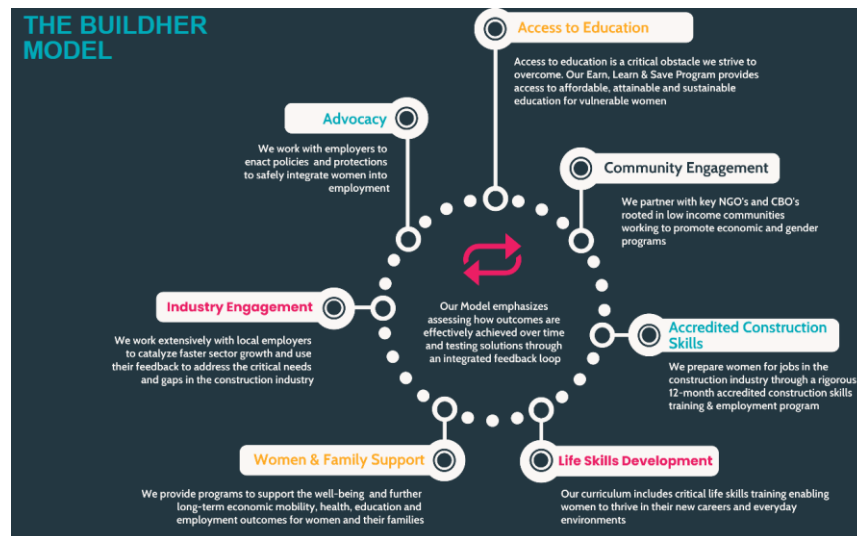
Context

The Kenyan construction sector, valued at USD 4.4 billion, faces a shortage of skilled artisans, particularly women who constitute only 3% of construction professionals. Key barriers include social norms, limited access to education, labor market conditions, time constraints, safety concerns, and lack of support networks. These impediments require a comprehensive approach to address them.

Approach

BuildHer stands as Kenya's sole technical training facility exclusively dedicated to empowering women in the construction industry, actively fostering gender inclusivity. Focused on marginalized urban communities, BuildHer recruits women, primarily aged 18 to 50, often uneducated or semi-educated, and predominantly single mothers. Before joining the programme, these women earned less than USD 3.10 per day from sporadic jobs.

BuildHer's [innovative model](#) involves accredited construction skills training, life skills development, family support, advocacy for gender equality, and alumni development. Addressing socio-economic barriers, this approach seeks to boost women's access to vocational training, creating a more inclusive workforce in an industry where women currently constitute less than 3%. Positioned to bridge the gender gap, BuildHer envisions systemic change by 2030, aiming to increase women's participation in skilled construction roles to 10%, ensuring equal pay and access to career growth. BuildHer emphasizes the role of quality education and skills development in women's resilience and productivity, contributing to Kenya's construction labor market growth. Notably, 80% of BuildHer's graduates have transitioned into jobs, marking a tangible impact on women's economic empowerment in the construction sector.



Partner

BuildHer, established in 2018, is a subsidiary of Orkidstudio Charity, with a mission to alleviate poverty and promote health and education, especially for disadvantaged youth. Operating as a non-profit in Kenya, BuildHer addresses the gender gap in the construction industry by providing accredited construction skills to marginalized women, aiming for greater financial prosperity and gender equality.

ADDRESSING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

1. Promoting gender equality (40% of marks)

The 'Jenga Wanawake Kwa Ufundi' initiative, is a pioneering effort to promote gender equality within Kenya's construction sector. The approach seeks to holistically empower women, transforming them into a formidable work force within an industry that is historically dominated by men.

Effective Approaches

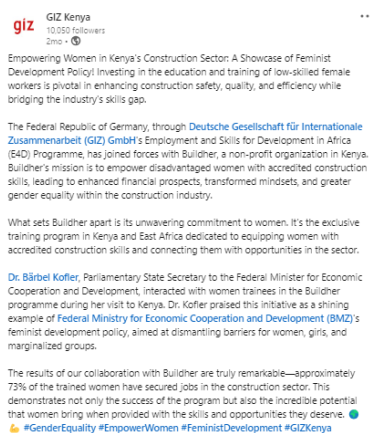
Proven strategies encompass a multifaceted approach. **Customized training programs**, meticulously designed to meet the unique needs of women artisans, form the backbone of the initiative's efforts. Simultaneously, **community advocacy sessions** have been instrumental in challenging societal norms and fostering an environment conducive to women's participation in the construction industry. Additionally, the collaboration with the **National Construction Authority** has not only enhanced **advocacy efforts** but also facilitated the development of new **accredited courses**.

Achievements and Results

- **Training and Employment:** The success of BuildHer is clearly demonstrated in the transformative journey of 169 women, who evolved from marginalized backgrounds into skilled professionals through our comprehensive training program. These women received NITA-accredited construction skills, preparing them not only for employment but also to become influential change-makers within the construction sector. A significant milestone was achieved with 111 of these women securing diverse roles, thereby enhancing female representation in the industry. To further amplify our impact, 'Training of Trainers' was conducted, focusing on the latest methodologies and practices in construction. This initiative ensured a sustainable and evolving training ecosystem. Additionally, the importance of viewing construction not just as a job, but as a viable career and business opportunity was emphasized. To support this perspective, extensive training in both technical and entrepreneurial aspects of the construction industry was provided. Mental health coaching, nutrition support, physical conditioning, and yoga into was integrated into the program to address the holistic needs of the female trainees.
- These comprehensive measures are designed to promote long-term economic mobility for BuildHer women, leading to improved health, education, and employment outcomes not just for the individuals, but also for their families. The immediate employment success post-training is a testament to the efficacy of the approach, and we are committed to continuing this journey towards long-term change within the industry.
- **Community Advocacy Sessions:** The 35 community advocacy sessions conducted by BuildHer have been pivotal in effecting positive change at the grassroots level. Beyond skills training, these sessions have been instrumental in reshaping community perceptions, breaking down entrenched gender barriers, and fostering a newfound sense of empowerment. Through direct engagement with marginalized communities, the initiative has ignited a dialogue that extends beyond the construction sector, contributing to a broader shift in societal attitudes towards gender roles and expectations.
- **Round Table Advocacy Sessions:** Collaboration with the National Construction Authority has culminated in five round table advocacy sessions, strategically designed to integrate gender mainstreaming and artisan engagement programs within the construction industry. These sessions serve as a platform for stakeholders to collectively address challenges and set forth a vision for a more inclusive and gender-responsive sector. The outcomes of these advocacy sessions are anticipated to influence policy development, creating a framework for sustained gender inclusivity in the long term.
- **Development of NITA (National Industrial Training Authority) Accredited Courses:** As a direct result of the advocacy and collaboration efforts with the National Construction Authority, BuildHer has played a pivotal role in the development of three new NITA-accredited courses i.e. carpentry & joinery, painting & decorating and tiling. These courses not only bolster the skill set of women artisans but also represent a qualitative enhancement of the construction industry's training landscape. By actively participating in the shaping of accreditation criteria, BuildHer ensures that women artisans are not merely participants but are recognized stakeholders contributing to industry standards.

2. Gender as a quality feature of our work (20% of marks)

Since 2022, the initiative has strengthened its position as a pioneering project in gender-transformative approaches in the construction sector within German Development Cooperation. As such, the initiative has played a crucial role in advocating for a holistic approach in empowering women in the construction sector. The approach has attracted large attention in the construction industry and has led to employer interest (demand) for trained women into specialized roles, proving that gender integration in the sector is not only possible and provides performance benefits that increase worker efficiency. The Federal Republic of Germany through the GIZ's Employment and Skills for Development in Africa (E4D) Programme has partnered with BuildHer to promoting gender equality in the construction sector in Kenya. The visibility of the program has been recognized by relevant stakeholders such as the National Construction Authority of Kenya and has provided the foundation of replicating similar initiatives in the rest of the country. This initiative was praised by the Parliamentary state secretary to the German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development as a shining example of the BMZ feminist development policy, aimed at dismantling barriers for women, girls and marginalized groups.



They are ongoing discussions with the Employment Promotion for Women for the Green Transformation in Africa (WE4D) to scale up the initiative and to empower more women.

3. Implementing feminist core principles (20% of marks)

The "Jenga Wanawake Kwa Ufundi- Program – Kenya" employs various gender-transformative approaches to challenge and change underlying norms, structures, and power dynamics contributing to gender inequality in the construction sector. The project's systemic change goals are evident in its vision of increasing women's participation in skilled roles to 10% by 2030, aiming to reshape the industry's landscape. It embraces intersectional inclusivity by actively recruiting women from marginalized urban communities, considering factors beyond gender alone.

The comprehensive approach addresses multiple barriers simultaneously, ranging from social norms to safety concerns. Advocacy for industry transformation involves engaging construction industry employers to integrate gender considerations, actively challenging traditional norms. Community engagement and media programming work to change societal perceptions of women in construction, contributing to broader cultural change. Collaboration with the National Construction Authority (NCA) and participation in public-private dialogues demonstrate a commitment to policy development and reshaping industry norms. The initiative's focus on long-term economic empowerment, envisioning systemic change by 2030, underscores its dedication to challenging traditional gender roles and promoting sustainability.

During training, the project goes beyond technical skills, providing mental health coaching, nutrition support, physical conditioning, yoga, childcare support, and family engagement programs. This holistic approach

prioritizes the overall well-being and long-term economic mobility of BuildHer women, positively impacting health, education, and employment outcomes for both participants and their families. The incorporation of these support programs reflects a compassionate and forward-thinking strategy, investing in the holistic development of women in the construction sector.

4. Cooperation (20% of marks)

Implementing the feminist development and foreign policy goals of gender equality within the "Jenga Wanawake Kwa Ufundi- Program – Kenya" was a collaborative endeavor. BuildHer engaged in strategic cooperation with a diverse array of partners, including Compassion International, RefuSHE, Muungano, Amazing Women, SHOFCO, Hope WorldWide Kenya, HelpAge, Uzazi Gender, African Youth Transformation, Restoring Dignity in Korogocho, Migingo Frontiers, Generation Shapers, Emerging Leaders Foundation, and others.

This expansive network ensured a holistic and inclusive approach, pooling resources and expertise to address gender disparities in the construction sector. The cooperative efforts were united by a shared commitment to feminist principles and gender equality. Partners collaborated on developing a collective vision and strategy that aligned with international obligations and requirements. The shared goal was to empower women in the construction industry comprehensively, encompassing training, job placements, and holistic well-being support. The program's success hinged on a cohesive strategy that prioritized mental health coaching, nutrition support, physical conditioning, yoga, childcare support, and family engagement programs alongside technical training.

Major Challenges

- **Limited Awareness and Perceptions:** Overcoming deep-seated stereotypes and biases regarding women's roles in construction presented a substantial hurdle. The program needed to invest in targeted advocacy efforts to raise awareness and challenge societal perceptions, fostering a more inclusive mindset.
- **Industry Acceptance:** Encouraging construction sector employers to actively recruit and accept women artisans posed a challenge. Building trust and illustrating the tangible value that women contribute to the industry required persistent engagement and collaboration with employers, challenging traditional norms.
- **Access to Resources:** Ensuring access to resources, including well-equipped training facilities and certification programs for women artisans, was a challenge. The program had to forge partnerships and seek funding support from various stakeholders to address resource constraints and provide optimal training environments.

Key Success Factors

- **Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborating with a diverse range of partners provided a wealth of perspectives, resources, and expertise. These partnerships played a crucial role in creating a participatory and sustainable ecosystem that supported women's development.
- **Holistic Approach:** The program's commitment to a holistic approach, encompassing not only technical training but also mental health coaching, nutrition support, and family engagement, contributed significantly to its success. This comprehensive strategy addressed women's overall well-being, aligning with feminist principles.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** The program's ability to adapt to challenges and adjust strategies based on feedback was instrumental. Flexibility allowed the initiative to navigate obstacles, overcome resistance, and evolve its approach, ensuring continued progress toward gender equality in the construction sector.