

# Evaluating the effects of a bundled youth employment intervention in Mozambique

A mixed-methods evaluation of MUVA'titude

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## Abstract

The DFID-funded MUVA programme supports female economic empowerment (FEE) in Mozambique. MUVA was set up with an explicit mandate to try out new approaches to FEE in urban Mozambique, using a “test, learn and adapt” programming approach. One of the initiatives is called MUVA’titude, which aims to empower marginalised young urban women and men through a bundled approach of providing wrap-around ‘soft skills’ training with technical vocational training, and a first work experience. This paper describes a longitudinal evaluation of the contribution of this project to changes in the lives of its ‘graduates’. The evaluation used a mix of methods, generating both quantitative and qualitative data. This included an innovative observational outcome assessment of changes in soft skills amongst participants, and a longer-term assessment of impact on agency and economic activities through a matched comparison survey integrated with qualitative participant feedback. This paper explains and reflects on the sequencing of these methods and the results that they elicited. The paper finds that mixed methods evaluation of project outcomes provided robust and insightful analysis of the project’s effects on intangible, hard-to-measure changes in soft skills, agency and economic empowerment. It also highlights the importance of soft skills for youth employment programmes and shows that a bundled approach can be very effective in transforming the lives of young people from poor neighbourhoods, especially women. This is particularly noteworthy in a context where many pure technical training programmes struggle to cater to the needs of young women and as a result fail to improve their agency and access to economic activities.

# I Introduction

**Access to remunerated work is essential for the economic empowerment of women.** In an economy where jobs are scarce and social norms still constrain women from reaching their economic potential, access to remunerated work is difficult, particularly for young women.

The DFID-funded MUVA programme supports female economic empowerment in Mozambique. Its target group is poor and excluded young women in urban *bairros* (poor neighbourhoods). MUVA was set up with an explicit mandate to try out new approaches as part of a “test, learn and adapt” programming approach.

**MUVA’titude is an approach created by MUVA to reduce the barriers to remunerated work.** The approach was developed specifically with a view to increase the employability of young women, through a training course adapted to local realities with the specific objectives of adding to technical training two components: i) strengthening the “soft skills” required in the workplace and ii) to provide a first job experience. The first cycle of MUVA’titude started in November 2016, with some 130 young women and men graduating in September 2017.<sup>1</sup>

**MUVA’titude was evaluated using a mixed-method approach.** The evaluation generated quantitative and qualitative data on intermediate outcomes in soft skill development. Longer-term impacts on agency and economic activity outcomes were compared with a matched comparison group of urban youth in order to assess the extent to which impacts improved for MUVA’titude project participants. Qualitative feedback was elicited from samples of MUVA’titude graduates at two points in time in order to track and interpret outcome- and impact-level changes in participants’ lives as a result of their exposure to the project. This paper presents the mixed-methods evaluation methodology which makes use of innovative measurement tools and provides a summary of the results achieved by the MUVA’titude pilot cycle.

## I.1 The MUVA’titude project

**The MUVA’titude project highlights the importance of building young people’s soft skills in order to make them more successful in their social and economic lives.** Research in Mozambique and around the world shows that employers are willing to provide training to boost technical knowledge, but would like their workers to already possess the soft skills and personal attitudes that will make them a productive member of their team. Due to patriarchal power structures, which expect women to play a passive role in society and aspire to little beyond domestic life women tend to be at a disadvantage in developing soft skills – many of which require entirely the opposite attitude (e.g. self-confidence, pro-activity, communication, etc).

The content and the methodology behind the soft skills training and its five modules was designed by a group of anthropologists, development practitioners and gender and employment experts. The group designed a wide range of interactive exercises and activities to:

- (i) help young people, reflect about how social norms affect their lives and their employability;

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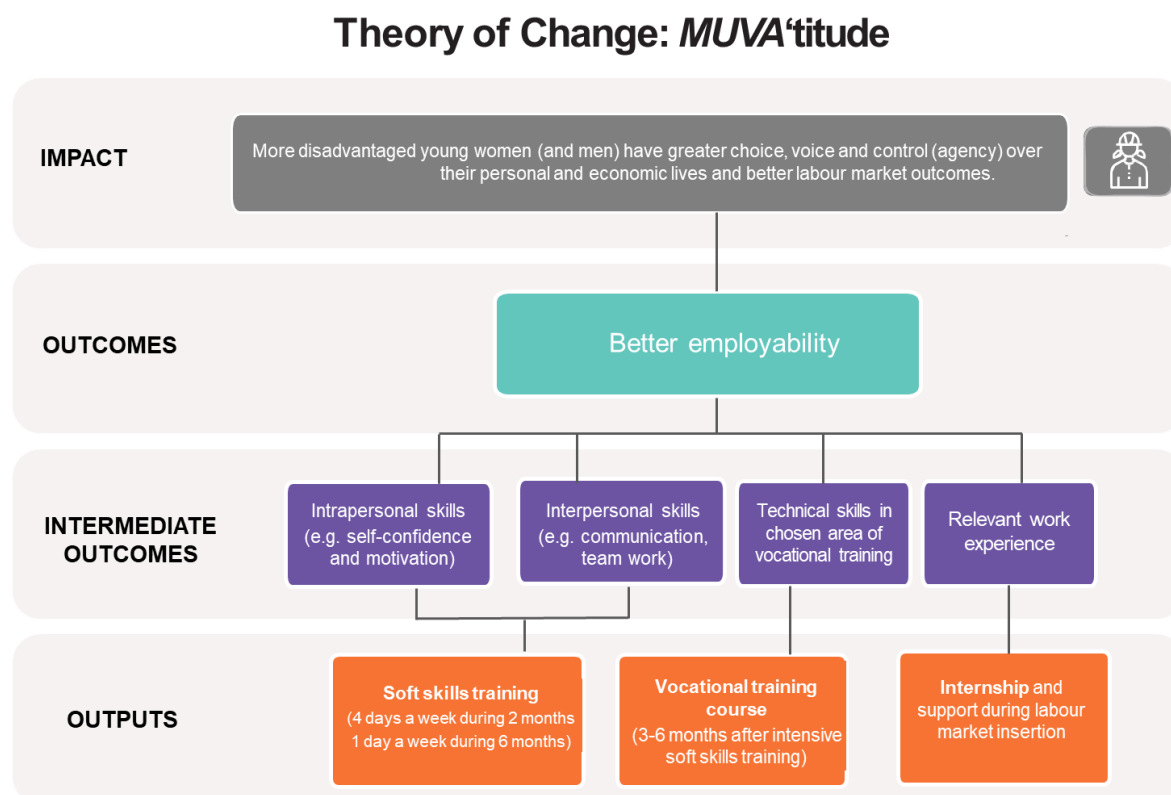
<sup>1</sup> A conscious decision was taken to include both men and women in the project, working under the evidence-based assumption that gender norms can only be changed when both men and women are working together.

- (ii) support young women to have a voice, determine their choices and preferences and strengthen their power to make decisions and take control over their future;
- (iii) improve the employability of young people by teaching them the attitudes and behaviours needed to find and remain in a job or business (soft skills).

The ‘theory of change’ (TOC) that is underpinning the MUVA’titude project shows how a combination of soft skills (intra- and interpersonal skills), technical skills and work experience would improve the employability of its participants contributing to the economic empowerment of young women and men from deprived urban backgrounds (see Figure 1). The acquisition of improved employability competencies were expected to lead to impact level improvements in economic activities alongside less tangible strengthening of ‘agency’ - choice, voice and control -- as participants became less constrained by social norms and more reflective about their own personalities, their position in society and the opportunities available to them.<sup>2</sup>

The full first cycle of MUVA’titude training was completed by 131 young people, all of whom went through a five-module, 2-month soft skills training which was designed to strengthen, a full-set of employability competencies, including for example, their team working and communication skills. These modules were delivered in sequence, with the relevant technical modules delivered in subsequent vocational training courses in independent TVET centres. The project also helped young people secure an internship which provided them with a first work experience and helped put into practice both the technical skills acquired in the TVET training, and the soft skills acquired during the initial 2-months course.

Figure 1. MUVA’titude Theory of Change



Source: Authors

<sup>2</sup> For more information see <http://muvamoz.co.mz/muvaititude/>.

## 2 Evaluation methodology

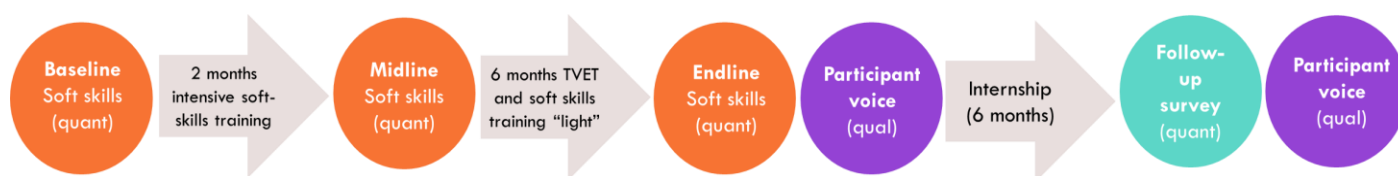
**A key element of the MUVA programme is its focus on testing, measuring and learning about what works.** With this in mind, the MUVA monitoring evaluation and learning (MEL team) designed a sequenced, mixed-method approach to measure and explain changes in outcome and impact indicators.

**Based on the theory of change the evaluation of MUVA'titude was designed to answer three main research questions:**

1. Do participants' soft skills improve throughout the project cycle?
2. Does participants' access to economic activities improve after having completed the full project cycle?
3. Does participants' agency improve after having completed the full project cycle?

For answering these questions, a sequence of primary quantitative and qualitative data collection exercises was designed and implemented (Figure 2).

Figure 2. MUVA'titude MEL: Sequence of data collection



Source: Authors

### 2.1 Measuring intra- and interpersonal skills (soft skills)

**Measuring soft skills is not a straight forward process.** The most common way to measure soft skills are questionnaire-based psychometric self-assessments. However, these often suffer from reference and social desirability biases which are exacerbated when applying them to young people with low levels of schooling. They have also been found to be more useful in measuring underlying personality traits rather than personality states that are malleable through interventions (Hilger 2018).

**Therefore, the MUVA MEL team developed a range of observational exercises in order to obtain a quantitative measure of participants' soft skills and how they change over time.<sup>3</sup>**

During group and individual exercises a team of experts rate the participants' display of a range of soft skills, using a 1-5 scale with a pre-defined description of behaviour and characteristics for each score level.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This is an adaptation of the method developed by Anne-Cecile M. Rebelo in the context in her study, measuring behaviour changes in pre-school children (Rebelo, AC 2011)

<sup>4</sup> This method has been tested and compared to more traditional self-assessment questionnaires. The data generated from the observational exercises has been found to be reliable and robust. In addition, analysis has shown that observational exercises are more suited to measuring personality states that can be changed through interventions, while self-assessments are more suited to measuring personality traits that stay fairly constant over a person's life (Hilger 2018).

Data was collected from participants at three different points in time: before the start of the intensive soft skills training (the baseline), after the intensive soft skills training (the midline), and after the end of six months technical and 'light touch' soft skills training (the endline).

**In addition, at endline the MEL team elicited qualitative 'participant voice' feedback from a sub sample of 52 participants across all six neighbourhoods in Maputo and Beira.** These participants were asked to describe and explain the contribution of the project to changes in their inter- and intra-personal skill set, as well as to the broader impact on their sense of self. Another qualitative 'participant voice' six months after graduating from MUVA'titude also allowed us to assess whether the reported changes were sustained.

In this way, a holistic measurement of soft skills was obtained by combining data on (i) participants' **externally observed** change in soft skills and (ii) participants' **self-reported** change in soft skills.

## 2.2 Measuring agency and economic activity outcomes

**The MEL team also looked beyond measuring outcome level changes in soft skills to assess the longer-term contribution of the project to impact level changes in economic empowerment.** We define economic empowerment as a combination of improving young women's agency (choice, voice and control) and economic activity outcomes.

To this end, six months after the completion of cycle 1, in March/April 2018, the MEL team conducted a follow-up survey with all MUVA'titude cycle 1 graduates, obtaining details on economic activities and agency outcomes, including questions around decision-making, expenses and savings.

**These results were then compared with a matching non-intervention 'control group' cohort of young women and men constructed from a representative urban survey – the MUVA urban youth survey – conducted in late 2017 and covering a similar population.** The questionnaires for the two surveys were largely the same and the individual respondents were matched by gender, age, city, school enrolment status, highest level of education and household poverty level.<sup>5</sup> This matching allowed the MEL team to analyse, specifically, the further contribution of the programme to changing levels and quality of remunerated economic activities and to levels of agency (as mapped onto the ToC diagram in Figure 1).

**In July 2018, as a follow up to the matching exercise, an additional qualitative fieldwork module was implemented with a sample of cycle 1 MUVA'titude graduates to provide further insight into impact level change on their workplace relationships and more fundamentally on their gendered roles and relationships in their homes and communities.** The method employed focus group discussions (FDG) with 36 young people across the 4 target *bairros* in Maputo and Beira. FDGs were conducted separately with young men and young women. Each FDG contained a mix of youth that had succeeded in engaging in remunerated economic activities after graduating and those that had not.

The method employed open-ended questions to test whether (i) *providing a mix of vocational and tailored soft skills training to a targeted group of marginalised young urban people will help them progress onto remunerated, higher skilled economic activities* and whether (ii) *that same training would also help to build their agency (choice – voice – control) and contribute to strengthening the relationship of the young people with their families and communities.*

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<sup>5</sup> For a fuller discussion see MUVA (2018). *Final Results – MUVA'titude Cycle 1*, Maputo: MUVA

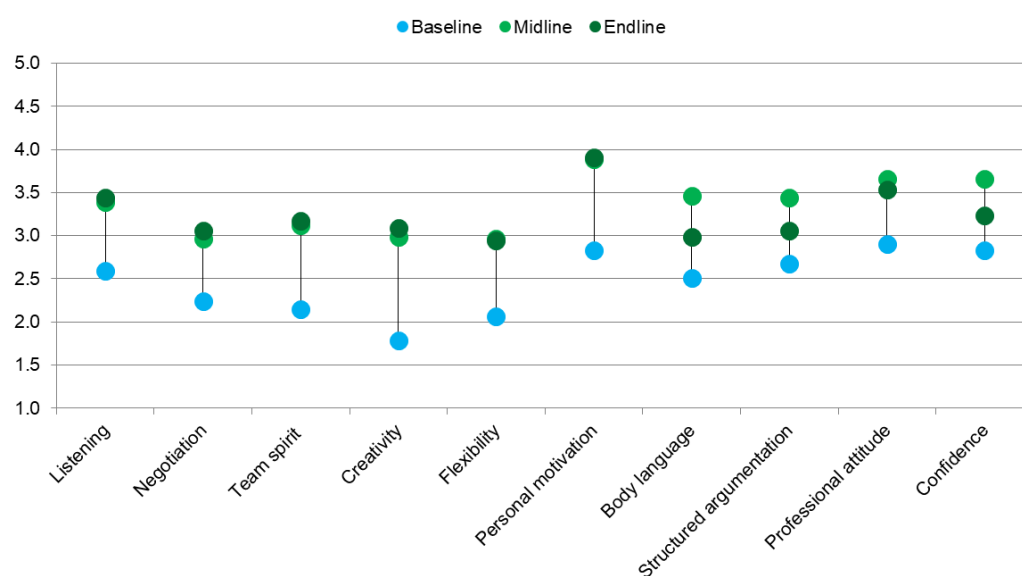
## 3 Results

### 3.1 Changes in intra- and interpersonal skills (soft skills)

Observational scoring confirmed that MUVA'titude participants significantly increased their soft skills, particularly the interpersonal skills such as communication and team work skills, during the project, as measured at three time points (see Figure 3). All the different soft skills assessed improved between baseline and midline, improving marginally thereafter. This suggests that the majority of the leap forward in terms of soft skills development was made after the intensive two months of soft skills training.

Between midline and endline participants only had a very light touch of soft skills training and focused on their vocational training. During this period they mainly maintained the higher level achieved via the intensive training, with scores for some behaviour indicators increasing marginally. While a couple of indicators (body language, structured argumentation and confidence) decreased again between midline and endline, they did not fall back to the baseline score which means that overall there was still a new increase between baseline and endline.

Figure 3. Raw changes in observer-assessed soft skills scores for MUVA'titude cycle I



Notes: Sample size for Cycle 1: 167

The evolution of the scores was also analysed taking a number of background characteristics into account. We performed a regression analysis with both the level of soft skills scores and the change in soft skills scores as the dependent variable. The results revealed the following:

- The level of soft skills is linked to a young person's level of schooling as well as poverty. Participants with higher levels of schooling from less poor households have higher levels of soft skills to begin with. However, we also find that those participants with lower levels of schooling *improved by more* than those with higher levels of schooling, meaning that the MUVA'titude training has allowed the more disadvantaged participants to catch up.
- Participants who missed fewer days of MUVA'titude classes improved their soft skills scores by more than the participants who missed more days. This result may point towards a positive contribution of attending MUVA'titude classes and developing one's soft skills.

The observed improvement in interpersonal skills was confirmed during qualitative, 'participant voice' feedback interviews conducted with 52 participants after the end of the soft skills training and vocational training (observational exercises endline). Both male and female participants, confirmed that the training helped them to strengthen a range of self-identified interpersonal skills.

**Most notably, they emphasised their ability to now communicate and express ideas and thoughts, not be afraid of sharing these and not be shy in talking publicly.** They had also learned *how* to speak with colleagues and supervisors, including non-verbal aspects of communication related to body and facial language, how to dress and what posture to adopt. One young woman from Beira was fairly typical in reflecting that *"I am different already, I did not talk much, now I talk. I did not know how to talk to people, sometimes I would respond in a bad way."* Similarly, a young male participant from Maputo commented: *"I used to be a shy person, I was afraid to speak and expose my thoughts fearing that the person would think something about what is inside me. Now I am very open, I speak to everyone and I am not afraid of what others will think."*

**An important part of becoming a better communicator, participants explained, was that they had become better listeners, emphasising the importance of this quality in interviews.** They had learned how to listen and tried to understand what others were saying, give them space, not interrupt and accept the opinion of others even if they did not agree. A young male participant from Beira reflected:

*"It changed a lot in my life. I have been transformed. Now I am another Pedro<sup>6</sup> and not who I used to be. I was shy, fearful and did not deal with people. But now, this Pedro is different. Now I am capable of making conversation with the neighbors, listen to opinions and reach a consensus."*

Similarly, a young female participant from Maputo explained:

*"When I spoke I was not able to give space, I would cut-off the person speaking, but now I know to leave people speaking and I know when is the right time to speak."*

**Participants commented further on the value of team working skills that they had developed, either during the training or in subsequent internships.** A young male participant from Maputo reflected:

*"I now value team work because I understand that one hand washes the other, and two hands wash the face."*

**The way that the participants speak about their transformation and the process of improving their communication and team work skills reveals that underlying the change in the interpersonal skills.**

**More than half the participants who were interviewed mentioned one or several elements related to *self-awareness* during the interview.** The soft skills training had helped them get to know themselves and their personality and had increased their self-esteem or self-confidence. This is a pre-condition for the improvement in communication skills that they described above. Participants also reflected on *social relations and empathy*. They linked this to an improved capacity to interact with others, a point which may help to explain the observed improvement in team working skills. But they also spoke about improved social relations more generally, whether referring to having made new friend in the course as a consequence of learning how to be social, or to having better family relationships.

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<sup>6</sup> This is not the participant's real name but it was changed for anonymity purposes.



Linked to social awareness, participants also reflected on changes in their gender-awareness during the course. They raised the issue of gender equality, with some participants describing the realization that men and women have equal rights as being biggest learning from the soft skill training, even applying this realization in their choice of vocational training or during vocational training classes. Other participants highlighted gender equality when explaining if anything had changed in their life as a result of participating in the course. A former male participant in Beira explained:

*“I have started cooking and sharing the household chores in my house. I used to think that women only stay at home, that she has to take care of the children and wash the dishes. Now, not anymore, I know that a woman does the same things as a man, even at school, [...] I think that women also need to study and go to school.”*

While many changes emphasised by the participants were focused on the personal or social level, interviewees also valorised a range of employability-related soft skills that they had acquired as part of the training. Personal motivation was an important theme, with participants explaining that they were now motivated to try to learn more and educate themselves further. Some interviewees explained that they had learned how to be more curious, ask questions if there were things that they did not understand in the work place. Participants emphasized the importance of being persistent, not giving up and being dedicated. Others described the importance of being pro-active and dynamic and taking initiative. Participants discussed the importance of punctuality in interviews and work attendance. Other personal traits discussed included being creative, being able to adapt or being flexible, being honest, being responsible and being humble or lower yourself in relation to superiors. In the words of a young woman from Maputo this means:

*“I learned to be flexible, and I learned to be humble, these are important values in the work place. We must be flexible and have the team work spirit. I learned to have attitude....we must not be afraid to do things, whenever we are given a task, we have to jump at it with interest”*

**During follow-up participant voice research in July 2018 (some eight months after the end of the project), MUVA'titude graduates feedback confirmed that these outcome level changes in soft skills had been sustained or even reinforced.** They saw themselves now as different people to those that had not gone through the training – more positive and with more focus and drive. They reflected that they now had respect for themselves and others and knew how to behave in the workplace. They perceived that MUVA'titude had given them a lot of opportunities and that it was now up to them to take advantage of these opportunities. Significantly this change in mindset was further confirmed amongst those participants who had not yet managed to find better economic activities. A young woman from Chipangara *bairro* in Beira reflected:

*“Before I did not know how to introduce myself, how to be at work, the first day how to work, how (to act) in the interview, how I was going to talk to the person, I was going to be scared, what I learned here when I got there I was not afraid. ”*

Interestingly they reported that prospective employers took note of their soft skill training certificate, intrigued and interested to know more. The young woman from Chipangagra reported that:

*“(the certificate) always creates curiosity (around) what exactly is ‘training in soft skills’ (formação humana). (it even) creates astonishment (in employers) when they see that it is something different from other CVs (so it) is already positive in this aspect.”*

**Beyond the soft skills they acquired for the world of work, MUVA'titude graduates' sense of self and their capacity to aspire remained strong.** Young women participants confirmed that their outlook on life had changed through the soft skills training. Even their families could see this. One young woman explained that the training enabled them “to know how to be a person.” Another one young woman from *Bairro Polana Canico* in Maputo reflected:

*We did not know what it would be (soft skills training) but it showed things in life and in life that people think differently. The person not only wakes up, talks and does, she has a reason for it.*

**This raising of consciousness amongst MUVA'titude graduates extended to a questioning their position in their households, communities and society, challenging the social norms they had grown up with.** Young women participants reflected that their role in the household had changed and that they have also managed to convince their families that a woman's role was not only in the home. Their families were now seeing the female graduates as a good example for the other children, while some of the male graduates reported that they were now helping at home: *"household work is not just for girls anymore."* A young woman from Munhava, Beira reflected:

*"(...) for a long time I had the idea that I was a housewife, I have to take care of my children, wash dishes, get water ... it was all on me ... now I have a different idea (that) the man can also do the same domestic work that the woman does and this is what has changed for me, and in my house. My father sees me as an example to other children. Although there are difficulties at home but at least when I go to talk to my father when he is angry he (sees me as someone who is there to) offer advice on how to educate the other children. (...)"*

## 3.2 Changes in economic empowerment

**Through the mixed-method research design, the MUVA MEL team was also able to assess the contribution of the MUVA'titude project to interrelated impact-level changes.** Improved soft skills, technical and vocational training together with a first work experience are expected to economically empower the MUVA'titude participants, particularly the women. Economic empowerment is defined as a combination of increased agency (voice, choice and control) and improved access to economic activities (see Figure 1).

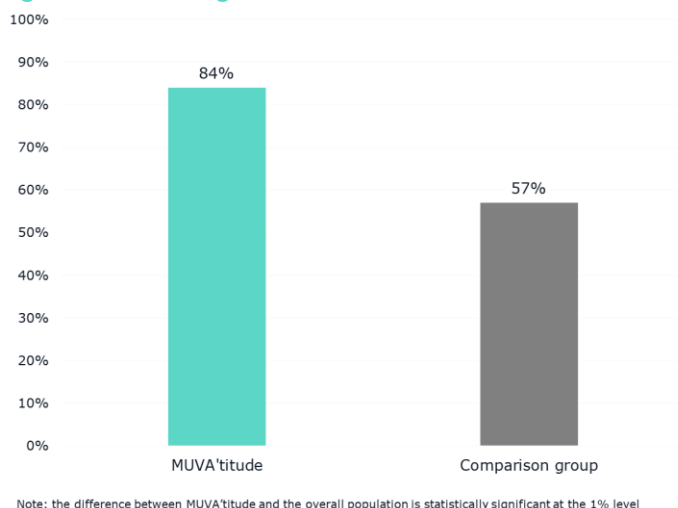
### 3.2.1 Agency outcomes

#### *Decision-making power*

The quantitative follow-up survey conducted six months after the end of the project confirmed that decision making autonomy amongst the MUVA'titude graduate cohort was significantly higher than amongst the comparison population.

We asked young people about who decides which kind of economic activities they engage in. This also includes decisions about where to work, for how long and at which times. **We find that 84% of all former MUVA'titude participants say they make the decisions about their economic activities by themselves.** This is significantly larger than among similar young people who have not participated in the MUVA'titude project.

Figure 4. Percentage who take decisions about their economic activities autonomously

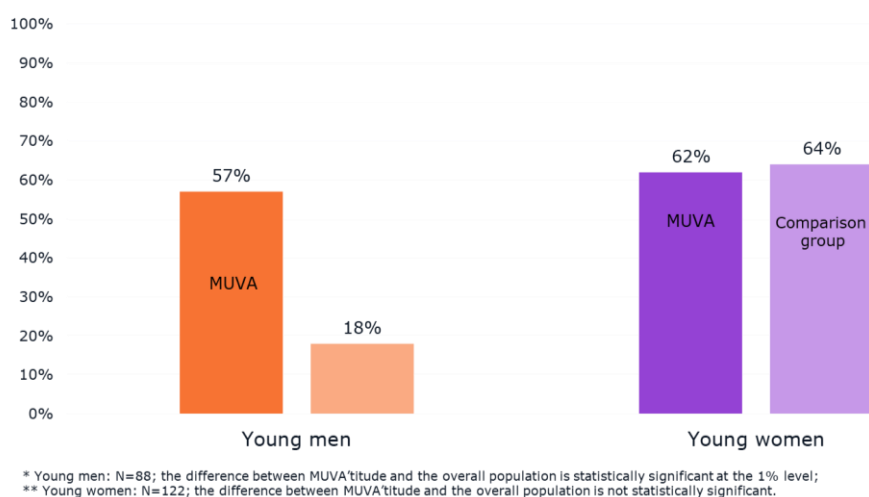


We also looked at the proportion of young people who are engaged in decisions about small household expenses. Such expenses are related to every day products that need to be bought in order to keep the household running, e.g. food, cleaning and hygiene products, etc.

We find that there is no statistically significant difference among MUVA'titude women and young women from the comparison group with regards to the proportion involved in decisions about small household expenses (**Error! Reference source not found.**). This may be due to the fact that traditionally small household expenses already fall within the sphere of responsibility for young women.

**Interestingly, when turning to young men, we see that significantly more male MUVA'titude participants are involved in small household expenses than young men who did not do MUVA'titude (57% and 18%),** indicating that the young men may be stepping into non-traditional roles in the family. Evidence from the participant voice exercises and reflection sessions suggests that the reason behind this finding might be related to the strong focus on social norms and bargaining power in the MUVA'titude sessions.<sup>7</sup> Both male and female participants are encouraged to adopt a collaborative approach when it comes to household decisions.

Figure 5. Percentage who are involved in decision-making on small household expenses by gender



<sup>7</sup> Participant voice interviews are carried out with a range of people participating in the project (e.g. young men and women, their families, employers and facilitators) to gather detailed information about changes that have occurred during the participation process.

## Household contribution and saving

An increase in access to remunerated economic activities amongst MUVA'titude graduates (see below) appeared to have had knock-on effects on levels of household contributions and individual saving by these young men and women. Compared with similar young people in the general population, more young MUVA'titude graduates worked and contributed to the expenses of their households.

While 74 per cent of MUVA'titude participants work and contributed money every month, only 45 per cent of young people from the rest of the population did. MUVA'titude graduates, both male and female, were also better able to save money every month (64 per cent versus 39 per cent) and relied less on financial contributions from others.

Participants that had successfully increased their income articulated how empowering it felt to be able now to both contribute and save, explaining their sense of agency in being able to support their family as well as themselves, with one part of the money going to the family and the other part for them. A young man from Chipangara, Beira reflected:

*"For me, a lot has changed because now I live alone. I was able to both buy furniture for the family house and start to rent my own house. I now give a little to my family and keep a little for myself - household income, food expenses and other things."*

### 3.2.2 Economic activities

#### Level of economic activities

When calculating economic activities indicators we followed international labour market concepts as outlined by the ILO.<sup>8</sup> Hence, an individual is defined as being engaged in a remunerated economic activity if they have done any type of work in which they earned money, even if it was just for one hour, in the last seven days previous to the survey. This can be either via wage employment or self-employment, in the formal or the informal sector. Individuals will also be classified as working if they did not do any work in the last seven days but do have an remunerated economic activity that they will definitely return to.

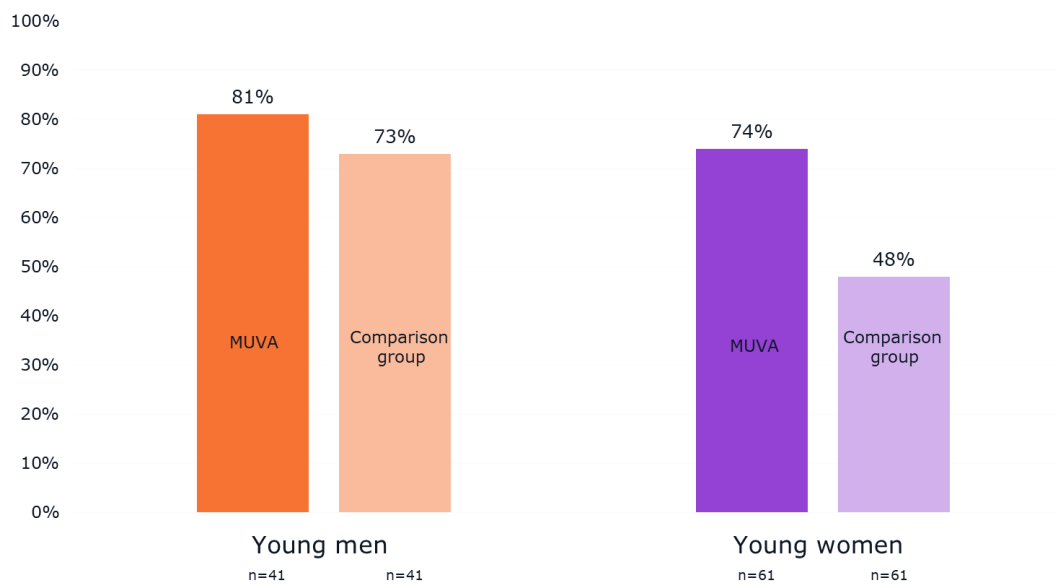
**We find that MUVA'titude participants are significantly more likely to engage in remunerated economic activities than similar young people who did not do MUVA'titude.** This difference is much more pronounced for young women than for young men. While only 48% of young women with similar characteristics from the overall population of young women in Maputo and Beira do some sort of remunerated work, 74% of female MUVA'titude participants are carrying out some form of remunerated activity. The difference for young men is not statistically significant.

Those graduates that had managed to find well-remunerated activities expressed, through participant voice feedback, their feelings about having *"won in life"*, confirming the positive value of the project's focus on improving young people's access to remunerated economic activities.

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<sup>8</sup> International Labour Organisation (1982). *Resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment*, adopted by the Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, 1982.

Figure 6. Percentage who engage in remunerated economic activities by gender



Note: Young men - the difference between MUVA'titude and the comparison group is not statistically significant.  
 Young women - the difference between MUVA'titude and the comparison group is statistically significant at the 5% level.

### Quality of economic activities

**Not only were MUVA'titude graduates more likely to find remunerated economic activities, but the quality of these activities was also higher than that of the comparison population.**

Compared to similar youngsters, more MUVA'titude graduates, both male and female, had higher skilled economic activities than their matched comparisons.<sup>9</sup> While among MUVA'titude graduates 56% had a higher skilled occupation, among the comparison group it was only 28%. Combined with the increased self-confidence and ambition instilled through the MUVA'titude project, young people aspired to better quality economic activities and as indicated by the matched data, many MUVA'titude graduates achieved these aims.

**Qualitative data from the follow-up FGDs eight months after the end of the course indicate that young men graduating from MUVA'titude, had acquired a perspective that taking informal work was sometimes necessary but only as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself.**

These young men talked confidently about planning for the future and managing their money for the long term. They talked about taking *biscates* (petty informal sector work) every day only when absolutely necessary, but thinking bigger:

*You cannot miss your class today because you have a "biscate" opportunity, you have to understand that some days you are going to have any money but after all you can have something good.*

When moving into the formal sector, these young men articulated a sense of agency derived particularly from starting your own business over and above taking paid employment. A young man from *Bairro Polana Canico* in Maputo was critical of the 'bad salaries' and bad conditions in formal employment and explained:

<sup>9</sup> We classified the young people's economic activities following the categories of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), as determined by the ILO (2007). For simplicity, we create two categories of types of activities. The first category is what we call "higher skilled occupations" which are occupations linked to three higher skills levels. The second category includes "elementary occupations" which is the category linked to a fourth, or lowest, skill level. This lowest skill level is linked to elementary occupations and includes occupations such as petty trading, cleaners and labourers.

*I want to be an entrepreneur, I want to conquer through my own effort, to have a mini-company, to have a team.*

Similarly, a participant in *Bairro Aeroporto*, Maputo, reflected the feelings of the whole group when he said:

*I am only working for this company to learn, earn and to have the professional experience because all I want is to create my own business. "No one wants to work for someone, everyone wants to have their own business, make their money. Companies are shutting down, (I want to be) not dependent on others.*

**Young women MUVA'titude graduates also aspired to higher quality economic activities, but with a greater prioritisation of formal, paid work over self-employment.** These female participants saw formal employments as the best option for them. However, in a labour market context with a tiny formal sector, these graduates faced structural obstacles and recognised the difficulties of finding such formal employment opportunities.<sup>10</sup> While it was relatively easy to find internship opportunities, they said, real work contracts remained very hard to secure. This cohort explained that MUVA'titude had taught them to look beyond formal work as the only desirable goal, to be creative and to achieve their dreams "step by step", even if this meant taking a casual job as a survival strategy along the way. One participant reflected:

*We (in MUVA'titude training) have just learned that we enter into self-employment. I used to see myself as a teacher, a nurse, a police officer but I now understand (that there are opportunities) beyond these dreams (...) that beyond just that formal job that I desire I can try to still try to look for work in other sectors.*

In the informal sector, opportunities for women remain skewed towards petty sales, and it was therefore unsurprisingly that for the majority of young female MUVA'titude graduates, faced with limited opportunities in the formal sector<sup>11</sup>, this remained a preferred activity of many because it did not require qualifications and there was always work: "you can always earn money this way." However, these young women were also beginning to articulate a viewpoint that men should not automatically dominate the higher skilled and better paid areas of self-employment, such as masonry, construction, welding, mechanics and electrics. One young woman reflected:

*When they talked about mechanics ... I only had notion that who should do the mechanical area would only be man... Muva'titude has opened my mind that it is not only men who can become mechanics or electricians but, yes, woman can also train in these professions.*

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<sup>10</sup> Only 7 per cent of the general population are in formal sector employment, while some 11 per cent of MUVA'titude graduates had secured formal sector work.

<sup>11</sup> In a labour market context where only 7 per cent of the urban population are in formal sector employment, the project faced structural obstacles in contributing to an increase in formal sector employment. Labour market segmentation posed further obstacles to young women trying to move away from petty informal sector sales as most higher skilled self-employment was male dominated.

## 4 Conclusion

The MUVA'titude project in Mozambique was designed to test an innovative approach to capacity building for disadvantaged young people from urban *bairros* that combined more conventional technical training with gender-centred soft skill training. These soft skills were seen as important attributes by prospective employers and also seen as a tool for longer-term economic empowerment amongst marginalised young women (and men) from these poor urban communities.

Through a carefully and creatively designed combined-methods study, the MUVA MEL team was able to measure and assess changes in outcomes and impacts amongst MUVA'titude participants. Observational scoring at three points in the module delivery cycle revealed that participants' soft skills improved during the period of training. Complementary qualitative, 'participant voice' feedback from participants articulated how the soft skills training had altered their self-perception and increased their confidence levels.

Beyond training module outcomes, the study also assessed the project's contribution to longer-term impacts on agency and economic activities by retrospectively comparing a sample of the MUVA'titude cycle 1 cohort with a matched population from a representative survey that provided a statistical profile of youth living in the same areas as the MUVA'titude participants. This comparative analysis was integrated with follow-up, outcome-to-impact participant voice feedback. The integrated analysis confirmed an increased level and quality of remunerated economic activities amongst MUVA'titude graduates combined with greater decision-making power over economic activity choices, financial decision-making responsibility and household income contribution amongst that MUVA'titude cohort.

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