

September 2024

# stories of change

SAUTI YETU,  
NGUVU YETU





# Foreword from the Executive Director



**Y**outh under the age of 15 years comprise 45 percent of Tanzania's population of over 53 million people (UN population division). At the current growth rate, Tanzania's population is projected to reach 70 million by 2025. Despite these numbers women and youth are among the most marginalized and underutilized Tanzania Citizens.

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**These young women have stood up against girls' rights violations in their communities.**

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Advocacy and lobbying for young women's rights has been caught up with a number of challenges in Tanzania such as development of strategy, leadership, crafting and sustaining coherent agenda for and by girls and young women in Tanzania while building strong constituencies so as to achieve visible results.

Therefore, in 2022 with the support of Open Society Foundation, Msichana Initiative launched the "SAUTI YETU, NGUVU YETU" project, which aimed at strengthening young feminists capacity to build their agency, strengthen their power to collective organizing and assert themselves better in shaping policies and hold the government accountable on issues around leadership, sexual reproductive health and rights and gender based violence.

The project has engaged 20 young women leaders from Tabora, Dodoma, Dar es salaam and Bagamoyo. These young feminists have in turn engaged a total of 240 as part of the groups they lead in their communities. These young women have been a catalyst for reaching other girls in their communities while standing up and speaking out against girls' rights violations happening in their communities. In two years, the participants have engaged in comprehensive workshops covering critical skills such as leadership strategies, feminist leadership, public speaking and effective advocacy techniques. As a celebrated impact of the project, the program participants have shown interest to vie for various leadership positions in the upcoming local government and general elections. The achievements of "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project not only celebrate the success of the individual participants but also symbolise a hopeful future for gender equality and leadership across the country.

# ABOUT “SAUTI YETU, NGUVU YETU” (Our Voice, Our Power) PROJECT



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Based on report which was released in 2017 on the situation of women’s movement in Tanzania conducted by Shamshad Rehmtullah and Hope Chigudu commissioned by the Embassy of Ireland, it highlighted the following challenges facing the women’s and girls’ movement in Tanzania: Fear of feminism, Narrow space for organizing, evidenced by shriking space for social justice mobilization accompanied by enhanced state surveillance. War on women’s sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, where rights to self determination and get protected from harmful cultural practices continue to challenge many women and girls where major issues facing girls are late entry into school, early marriages, teen pregnancies, poor performance and high rates of dropouts and repetitions which are caused by social cultural beliefs, gender biased socialization in school, economic, health and HIV/Aids factors.

Despite youth led interventions to advocate for the rights of girls in Tanzania particularly right to education there are still discriminatory laws which prove to be a major hindrance to girls’ emancipation, such laws include the Law of Marriage Act,1971 which allows girls to be married before reaching 18 despite the Court of Appeal ruling in the case of Attorney General vs Rebeca Gyumi which directed the Government to amend the discriminatory provisions.

Msichana Initiative has been pivotal in championing the ending child marriages as one of the common agenda to inspire young women and young feminists to organize, influence and mobilize alliances to push the government to change the law while leveraging on intergenerational linkages and learning. Despite amplifying the voice of girls for such

reforms, Msichana felt the pressing need for a skilled critical mass of young women feminists to influence the desired outcomes. Msichana learned of the absence of the conceptual clarity amongst young feminists advocates; limited intergenerational interactions, poor advocacy skills, Ngonization of feminist interventions and presence of spersed uncoordinated initiatives on issues around sexual reproductive health, leadership and feminism.

“SAUTI YETU, NGUVU YETU” is a program for young feminists which aims to create a new cradle of young women leaders in Tanzania that has identified their agenda, effectively organize around common goals, and assert themselves in shaping the discourse on feminism, feminist leadership, and gender justice. The program brought together 20 young women feminists from Nzega District, Kongwa District, Bagamoyo Districts, and Dar es Salaam region to showcase their power, agency for collective organizing, and hold the government and communities accountable for girls’ issues.

Despite these young women feminists coming from different regions with different lived experiences of gender inequalities, there were common issues which unified them and strengthened their sisterhood, solidarity, and collective organizing. Considering their unique underlying social-cultural barriers they identified three agenda which informed their movement including Feminist leadership, Gender Based Violence, and SRHR. They also discussed their common challenges, as well as strategizing on better strategies and advocacy tools to carry their identified agenda forward.

Girls' voices in society cannot be underestimated. Their unique perspectives, ideas, and experiences are vital for creating a more equitable and inclusive world. Empowering girls to speak up, engage in decision-making processes, and lead initiatives is a fundamental step toward achieving a brighter and more just future for all. Girls who are visible in leadership roles and as advocates for change, serve as role models for future generations, encouraging more girls to step into positions of influence and power.

We acknowledge the power of storytelling as a compelling tool for social change and tackling entrenched barriers to equality, challenging stereotypes and narratives that prevent girls and young women from unleashing their full potential. Due to patriarchal norms, and social-cultural barriers women and girls have been told narratives of who they are, what they should do, and put in societal boxes of what is deemed to be wrong or right. Through Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu project, the 20 Young Women Feminists were facilitated with a safe space and tools and learned the value of sharing experiences and knowledge through storytelling. By discussing their experiences, challenges, and successes, they were able to learn from each other and discover new strategies for their advocacy work. Story telling have enabled them to re-imagine new ways of advocacy, approaching their world and transmitting values and knowledge which embrace their true voice and power.

Young feminists identified 3 common agenda to advocate which are young girls and women increase participation in leadership, SRHR and Gender equality. They also agreed on mobilization strategies at community levels where they engaged with VICOBA, SACCOSS groups and conduct trainings at charity and donations spaces.

Through their community leadership, girls and young women managed to form groups in their communities resulting in 20 groups being formed in their villages. The groups were self-organizing and met occasionally to discuss and plan how to mobilize and advocate for change in their own communities. 240 girls and young women were reached through the formation of 20 groups in Pwani-Bagamoyo, Dar es Salaam, Tabora-Nzega, and Dodoma-Kongwa.

These girls and young women have demonstrated their agency in grassroots level and national level through speaking in national processes such as Tanzania Development Vision 2050, National dialogues for women's participation in the electoral processes, Post-Midpoint convening for Generation Equality Forum focusing on feminist accountability for the goals and girls' platforms such as the Girl Agenda Forum (GAF) which is convened during the commemoration of International Day of a Girl Child.

**Rebeca Gyumi**  
Executive Director



# Loveness Athumari

Being a 27-year-old woman from Mizibaziba, Nzega District, Tabora Region. She is married and a mother of two children. Loveness's journey has been one of resilience, determination, and empowerment, shaping her into a significant figure in her community.

At the young age of 17, Loveness found herself pregnant, a situation that was met with disappointment by her family, especially her father. It was a difficult time for her, but she was fortunate to deliver her child safely. Despite the challenges, her father made a remarkable decision to allow her to return to school, something that is not common for many girls in similar situations. Loveness's return to education was a turning point in her life. She completed her nursing college education and has since become an independent businesswoman, owning her own business.

Loveness's influence extends beyond her achievements. She holds several leadership positions within her community, including serving as the Secretary of the District Forum in her village, the Secretary of the Women's Forum in her ward under CCM, and the Treasurer of the Women's Forum at the district level. She is also the Chairperson of the Youth in the Tongi Parish

Through her work with the Msichana Initiative under the "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project, she became a catalyst for change among the youth and women in her village. She educates girls in primary and secondary schools on sexual and reproductive health, self-awareness, and growth. Additionally, she actively participates in village forums, focusing on combating gender-based violence, raising awareness about reproductive health, and addressing harmful cultural practices.

In 20 to 21 May 2024, Loveness was honored to be a speaker as a panelist at the National Women's Network Conference on Constitution, Elections, and Leadership. As an emerging feminist leader, she has used her platform to inspire and motivate women in her community to challenge gender norms and pursue leadership roles.

Loveness's story is a testament to the power of education, resilience, and the impact of community leadership. Her efforts continue to empower others, particularly women and girls, to stand up against gender-based violence and to seek equality in all areas of life. Through her advocacy and leadership, Loveness is fostering a community where gender equality is not just a goal but a reality and she expects to contest as councilor at Mizibaziba.

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**She educates girls in primary and secondary schools on sexual and reproductive health, self-awareness, and growth.**

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# Joyce Deus

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She is a 25-year-old woman from Nkiniziwa in Nzega District, Tabora Region, has experienced both challenges and triumphs in her young life. After completing her Form Four education at Nkiniziwa Secondary School in 2019, she continued her studies in 2020 at Karema Secondary School in Katavi Region, Tanganyika District. However, her educational journey was abruptly interrupted in 2021 when she became pregnant. This led to her expulsion from school, and she returned home to care for her pregnancy.

In 2021, Joyce gave birth to a baby girl, and due to family circumstances and legal restrictions, she was unable to marry and had to raise her child on her own. Despite these challenges, Joyce refused to be defeated by her situation. Instead, she turned to small businesses, including running a food stall (mama lishe) and selling fabrics like vitenge and scarves, to support herself and her daughter.

Joyce's determination and resilience caught the attention of the Msichana Initiative, an organization focused on empowering young women. Through this organization and its projects, Joyce emerged as a leader in her community. She became a mentor for girls through the Msichana Café and served as a community advisor in her ward, Nkiniziwa.

Moreover, she was appointed as the main chairperson for the "Sauti

Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project thus aimed at empowering young female activists to strengthen their voices, build their capacities, and actively participate in policy-making and holding the government accountable on issues related to leadership, reproductive health, and gender equality.

Through her leadership, Joyce has organized and led various discussions in primary and secondary schools in her ward and surrounding areas. She focuses on these three key areas—leadership, reproductive health, and gender equality—aiming to spark change in her community. Her work has been instrumental in helping girls and women recognize their rights and self-awareness, and fight against gender-based violence.

Joyce's story is a powerful example of how one can turn personal challenges into opportunities for growth and leadership. Her journey from a young mother facing societal and legal challenges to a community leader advocating for women's rights is an inspiration to many in her community and beyond.



# Dorcas Jackson

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A 20-year-old from Mwakashanhala in Nzega District, Tabora Region, is a single mother and a resilient young woman who has overcome significant challenges. She is both a skilled tailor and a dedicated health worker at a local village dispensary, where she provides care for HIV/AIDS patients. Her work involves offering vital services to various groups, including children, breastfeeding mothers, and the elderly, every two months based on the specific needs of these groups.

Dorcas' journey was not easy. She had to leave school after becoming pregnant, which led to her expulsion and caused great distress both within her family and in her community. After giving birth, she spent four months at home before a life-changing opportunity came her way. In 2021, the Msichana Initiative, an organization dedicated to empowering young women, identified Dorcas as a candidate for their GAPE program, which aimed to support girls who had faced the challenge of teenage pregnancy.

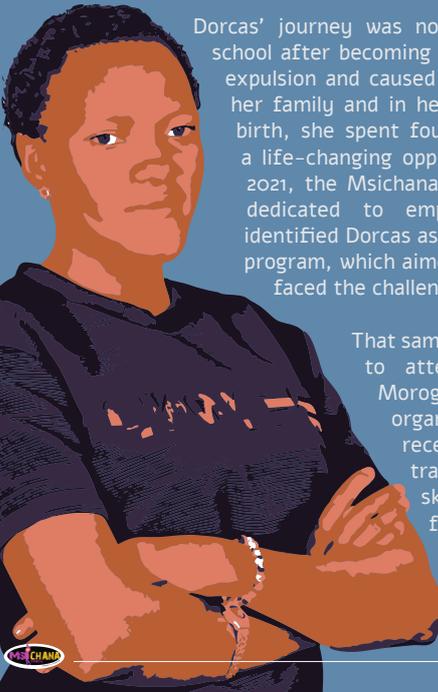
That same year, Dorcas was selected to attend training sessions in Morogoro, hosted by the SAT organization. There, she received entrepreneurship training, learning valuable skills such as making batik fabrics, nutritional flour, and both liquid and bar soaps. These skills marked the beginning of her journey toward self-

awareness and empowerment, showing her that she had an important role to play in her community.

With her new skills, Dorcas started making and selling liquid soap and nutritional flour. The income she earned allowed her to purchase her sewing machine, which she uses for her tailoring business. In addition to her tailoring, Dorcas also engages in trade, selling clothes and accepting payments in the form of money, maize, rice, or peanuts.

Dorcas has also taken on a leadership role in her community as a leader in the "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project under the Msichana Initiative. In this role, she has been instrumental in helping other girls in secondary schools and the broader community by advocating against child marriage and promoting self-awareness and personal growth. Her efforts are aimed at empowering young girls to achieve their goals and take charge of their futures.

Dorcas Jackson's story is one of transformation and willpower. From facing the stigma of teenage pregnancy to becoming a leader and mentor in her community, she has shown that with the right support and determination, it is possible to overcome adversity and make a positive impact on the lives of others.



# Lucy Nzige

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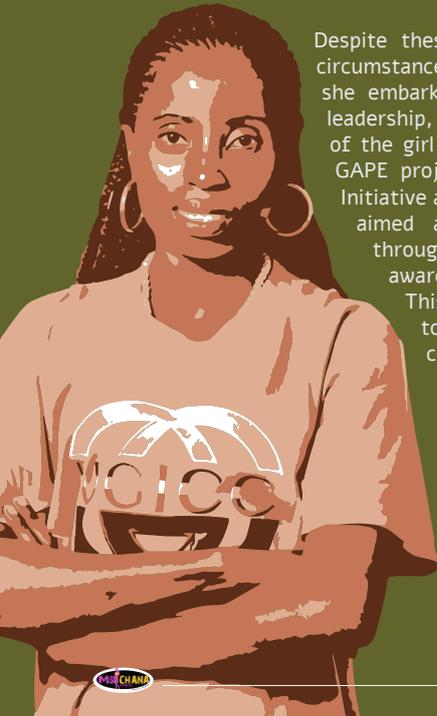
Aged 26, shortly after completing Form Four in 2015, Lucy Nzige found herself pregnant. This significant life event occurred during a time when her educational journey was already filled with challenges when severe illness from form Two until the end of secondary school in 2024, she struggled with academic performance, making it hard for her to achieve her education.

Despite these setbacks, Lucy did not let her circumstances define her future. Instead, she embarked on a journey of advocacy and leadership, particularly in fighting for the rights of the girl child. Her activism began with the GAPE project, an initiative by the Msichana Initiative and Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania aimed at economically empowering girls through sustainable agriculture, self-awareness, and personal development. This project opened the door for her to become actively involved in her community.

Through her involvement, she became a key member of a community forum dedicated to discussing the challenges faced by girls, advocating against gender-based violence, and bringing awareness to various cases of abuse. Her leadership extended further when she took on the role of a youth leader in

the “Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu” project, where she championed various agendas to inspire and drive change within her community. Her efforts have been instrumental in organizing and leading public meetings, and forums at district and national levels, as well as in secondary and primary schools, and village councils. Collaborating with other emerging feminists from Nzega, she has worked tirelessly to create a community that supports and empowers girls and women.

Through her determination and leadership, Lucy has transformed from a young mother facing educational challenges into a powerful advocate for girls’ rights and gender equality. Her story is a testament to the impact that one determined individual can have on their community, inspiring others to stand up for their rights and strive for a better future.



# Aziza Mrisho

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A 27-year-old from Utwigu in Nzega District, Tabora Region, is a young feminist who has turned personal challenges into a mission to fight for girls' rights in her community. Her journey took a difficult turn when she became pregnant while in Form Two, forcing her to leave school. Despite this setback, Aziza found a way to rise above her circumstances and become a leader and advocate for girls.

Aziza became involved in activism through the GAPE project, an initiative aimed at economically empowering girls through organic farming and teaching them self-reliance and resilience. As a beneficiary of this program, Aziza gained valuable skills and a strong sense of purpose. This experience ignited her passion for advocating for girls' rights, especially in combating gender-based violence.

Her activism has led her to participate in various platforms, including FireSide Chats and satellite events, where she engages in discussions about the challenges girls face and works to bring these issues to the attention of decision-makers. As an emerging feminist, Aziza

has been able to mobilize her community around critical issues such as leadership, reproductive health education, and the fight against gender-based violence. She has encouraged women to take part in decision-making processes and to run for leadership positions.

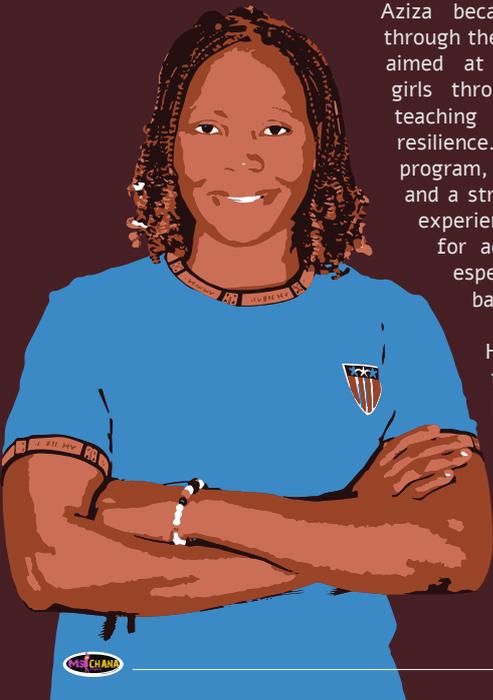
Through her involvement in the "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project, Aziza has solidified her role as a young leader, advocating for change and empowering others to do the same. Her work not only impacts her immediate community but also serves as an inspiration to other young women facing similar challenges.

Aziza Mrisho's story is one of resilience, empowerment, and the drive to create a better future for the next generation of girls. From being forced to leave school due to pregnancy to becoming a powerful advocate for girls' rights, Aziza's journey exemplifies the strength that comes from overcoming adversity and using one's experiences to effect positive change in society.

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**Her journey took a difficult turn when she became pregnant while in Form Two, forcing her to leave school.**

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# Mariam Dharau Rajabu

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Mariam Dharau Rajabu. Born on June 4th, 1999, in Nianjema Ward, Bagamoyo District, Pwani Region, Mariam's early life was marked by challenges that shaped her into who she is today.

She completed her primary education in 2012, but her journey wasn't smooth. Her parents separated when she was just four, and her mother was left to take care of her, while her father focused on her brother's education. Despite the financial struggles, her mother was determined to ensure Mariam went to school. When Mariam reached fourth grade, she excelled in her studies and was selected to represent her region in netball, a proud moment for her and her mother.

However, things got tougher when it was time for secondary school. Mariam's mother couldn't afford to send her, and when Mariam sought help from her father, she was instead accused of theft by her stepmother and thrown out of the house. Despite this, Mariam remained determined, and with her mother's support, she eventually started secondary school, although late.

As she reached Form Four, her mother was involved in a

serious car accident, which further strained their financial situation. Yet, Mariam persevered, even when she became pregnant just a month before her final exams. With her mother's encouragement, she completed her exams and gave birth to her son, finding work at a bakery to support them both.

In 2023, Mariam's life took a positive turn when she was approached by the director of an organization called B2JF. Through this, she became involved in women's empowerment and eventually ran for the position of youth secretary for UVCCM in her ward. Despite having little money, she campaigned tirelessly and won the election through the contributions of her group she found through a Sauti yrtu nguvu yetu.

Now, Mariam leads 9 branches and over 8,000 youth members in Nianjema Ward, and she is also a member of the main meeting committee for Bagamoyo District. Her story is one of resilience, determination, and the belief that, no matter the odds, dreams can be achieved.



# Rukia Miraji

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Rukia Ibrahim Miraji, a 25-year-old from Magomeni in Bagamoyo District, Pwani Region, has walked a path filled with challenges and triumphs. After completing her Form Four education, Rukia faced a significant setback when her father passed away, making it difficult for her to continue her studies. However, her determination to pursue education did not go unnoticed. She received a scholarship from CAMFED, an organization dedicated to supporting girls' education, which enabled her to continue her studies and eventually graduate with a diploma in Community Development.

Rukia's educational journey, supported by CAMFED, not only equipped her with academic knowledge but also inspired her to become a change-maker in her community. As a budding feminist and activist, Rukia has taken on the responsibility of championing various agendas aimed at bringing about social change, particularly in advocating for girls' rights.

She formed a group with other young women under Sauti yetu, and Nguvu yetu to discuss the challenges they face and to provide education

on critical issues such as reproductive health, leadership, and gender equality. This group has become a platform for raising awareness and educating the community, especially on the importance of empowering girls and ensuring their rights are protected.

In addition to her activism, Rukia is an entrepreneur and serves as a member of the Maji Coast Sub-ward Council, where she actively participates in decision-making processes that impact her community. Her role in the council allows her to advocate for the rights of girls and women, ensuring that their voices are heard in local governance.

Rukia Ibrahim Miraji's story is one of resilience, empowerment, and dedication to making a difference. From overcoming the loss of her father and the financial barriers to education to becoming a leader and advocate for gender equality, Rukia exemplifies the power of education and community engagement in driving positive change. Her work continues to inspire and empower others to take action in their communities, particularly in the fight for girls' rights and gender equality.

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**Her determination to  
pursue education did  
not go unnoticed.**

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# Rahima Kondo

Rahma Kondo Shabani, a 24-year-old from Zinga Ward in Bagamoyo District, Pwani Region, has faced significant challenges in her life, but she has turned these obstacles into opportunities for advocacy and leadership. At the age of 17, Rahma was on the brink of being forced into marriage, a common fate for many young girls in her community. However, she made a bold decision to escape this fate by becoming a domestic worker.

Rahma's determination to protect herself from child marriage quickly evolved into a mission to help other girls avoid the same difficulty. Her leadership skills were recognized early on, and she was chosen to lead other domestic workers in the Initiative for Domestic Workers in Bagamoyo. In this role, she has become a vocal advocate against child marriage, not only within her ward but also in neighboring areas.

Rahma has actively participated in various forums focused on combating the abuse and exploitation of domestic workers. She is a strong believer in defending the rights of girls and women, and her feminist principles guide her work. To further her advocacy, Rahma established a group of young female leaders who are empowered to address key

issues such as leadership, reproductive health, and gender equality. This group, under the "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project, works to promote these agendas within their communities.

Rahma's story is a powerful example of how one person's courage can spark change. From narrowly escaping child marriage to becoming a leader and protector of girls' rights, Rahma's journey is one of resilience and empowerment. Her efforts continue to inspire other young women to stand up for their rights and to work towards a future where gender equality is a reality. Through her leadership and advocacy, Rahma is making a lasting impact on her community and beyond.



# Leonardina Gosteness



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26 years old, from Kiromo Ward in Bagamoyo District, Pwani Region, mother of two children has faced numerous challenges but has emerged as a dedicated leader and advocate for her community. Working as a tailor and designer of various clothing styles, she also plays a significant role in her community's leadership, serving as the Secretary of Youth in her ward and as a member of the main council for the Revolutionary Party (CCM).

Her journey has been shaped by a deep commitment to fighting gender-based violence in her community. Together with village leaders, she has taken a stand against such injustices, directly helping girls who have been victims of forced marriages and other forms of abuse. Notably, with her group, she helped two girls return to school after they were married while still students, and she also assisted a girl who had passed her exams but was unable to afford school supplies. Her actions ensured that these girls had the opportunity to continue their education.

In a particularly courageous act, she confronted her landlady and her landlady's

grandson after discovering that the grandson was sexually abusing her son. Despite facing harsh words from her landlady, she took action to protect her child and hold the perpetrators accountable.

On May 14, 2024, she rescued a girl who was being mistreated by her grandfather, working with a neighbor to safely return the girl to her home in Bukoba. This act of bravery highlights her commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals in her community.

Her own life has not been without difficulties. She had to leave school after becoming pregnant while in Form Three, a situation that dashed her dreams and left her feeling lost. However, she refused to give up. She learned how to make snacks and sold them door-to-door, saving enough money to pay for tailoring classes. This skill has since become her livelihood.

Her involvement with the Msichana Initiative began when she attended a meeting for party leaders. The organization provided her with the opportunity to work on initiatives that empower girls and women through the Sauti yetu, Nguvu yetu project. Through this work, she has not only acquired valuable knowledge and skills but also found a way to heal from the emotional trauma of her past.

Today, she is a strong advocate for girls' rights, helping to change the lives of others in her community while continuing to pursue her dreams. Her story is a powerful reminder of resilience and the impact one person can have on the lives of many.



# Happy Pius

Happy Pius William, a 25-year-old from Nyerere Village in Hogoro Ward, Kongwa District, Dodoma Region, has faced numerous challenges but remains steadfast in her pursuit of making a positive impact in her community. As a single mother and small-scale entrepreneur, Happy's journey has been marked by resilience, determination, and a commitment to social change.

Happy's dream was to become a Community Development Officer (CDO), and she pursued this goal by earning a certificate in Community Development. However, due to financial constraints, she was unable to continue her education to the diploma and degree level, forcing her to put her ambitions on hold. Despite this setback, Happy's passion for community development did not diminish. She remained committed to making a difference and was ready to seize any opportunity that came her way to contribute positively to her community.

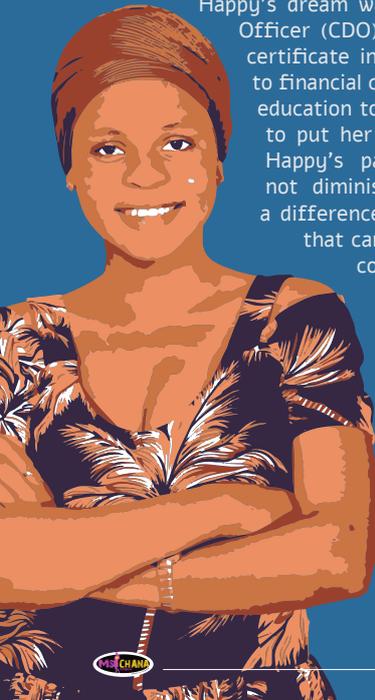
Her breakthrough came when she joined the Msichana Initiative through the GAPE Project 2021, where she learned valuable skills and gained a deeper understanding of community issues. The subsequent "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project further empowered her, helping her to develop self-awareness, confidence, and a renewed sense of purpose. Through these experiences, Happy found the strength to pursue her dreams and to inspire others in her community.

One of her significant contributions has been her work in advocating for girls' rights. She has organized seminars for girls in her community, educating them about their fundamental rights and encouraging them to stand up against gender-based violence. Happy also played a key role in forming a group that actively raised awareness and organized a peace movement to protest against female genital mutilation (FGM), a harmful practice that still affects many girls in her region.

In one notable case, Happy successfully intervened to stop the forced marriage of a 16-year-old girl in her community. The girl's parents had arranged the marriage against her will, but Happy, with determination and perseverance, brought the case to the attention of the police, ensuring that the marriage was canceled and the family was held accountable. This act of courage not only protected the girl but also sent a strong message against child marriage in her community.

Happy's efforts have had a lasting impact on her community, particularly in the fight against child marriage and gender-based violence. She has organized community meetings to raise awareness and empower others to take action against these harmful practices. Through her work, she has become a beacon of hope and a symbol of strength for many young girls and women.

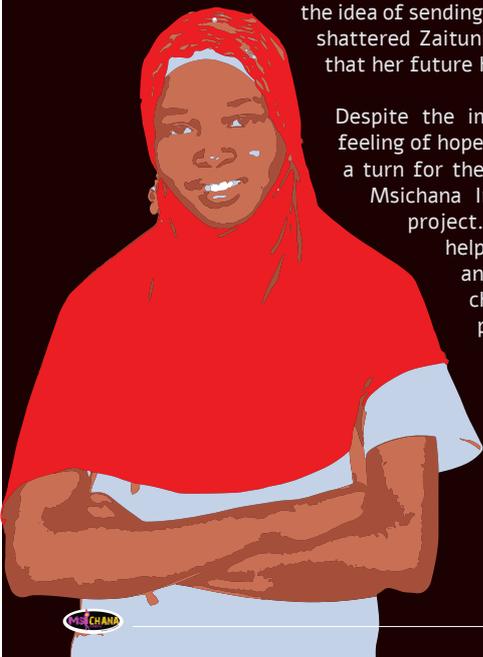
Happy Pius William's journey from a young woman with unfulfilled educational dreams to a powerful advocate for girls' rights demonstrates the profound impact that determination and community engagement can have. She is committed to continuing her fight for gender equality and dreams of becoming a leading feminist advocate. Happy is grateful to the Msichana Initiative for helping her find her voice and for giving her the tools to become a fearless leader in her community.



# Zaituni Mbaliki

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Zaituni Mbaliki Ally, a 25-year-old from Sejeli Ward in Kongwa District, Dodoma Region, has faced significant challenges but has emerged as a resilient and determined leader in her community. After completing her Form Four education, Zaituni had plans to attend the Institute of Planning in Tanga. Her parents made all the necessary preparations for her to continue her education. However, during this time, Zaituni discovered she was pregnant, a revelation that deeply disappointed her parents and led them to abandon the idea of sending her to college. This news also shattered Zaituni's hopes, leaving her feeling that her future had come to an abrupt end.



Despite the immense disappointment and feeling of hopelessness, Zaituni's story took a turn for the better when she joined the Msichana Initiative through the GAPE project. The training she received helped her regain her confidence and taught her that despite the challenges she faced, it was possible to move forward and achieve her goals.

With renewed determination, Zaituni became actively involved in her community. She joined a community platform focused on empowering individuals to stand against gender-based

violence and to report such incidents. Her commitment and leadership skills quickly became evident, leading her to become the Chairperson of Msichana Café in Sejeli.

The "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project played a crucial role in furthering Zaituni's leadership journey. Through this project, she gained the skills and confidence to run for various positions within her community and government structures, including representing her village. Zaituni also formed a group of young women, empowering them with feminist principles and focusing on advocating key issues such as reproductive health, leadership, and gender equality.

Zaituni's work has been instrumental in promoting a community that values equality and actively combats gender-based violence. Her journey from a young woman whose dreams were nearly crushed by an unexpected pregnancy to a leader advocating for women's rights and equality is a powerful testament to the impact of resilience and support. Today, Zaituni continues to be a force for change in Sejeli, inspiring others and working tirelessly to create a community where girls and women can thrive without fear of violence or discrimination. Her story is a shining example of how setbacks can be transformed into opportunities for growth and leadership.



# Felister Dastani

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Ferista Dasitan Masisila, a 23-year-old from Iduo Ward in Kongwa District, Dodoma Region, has faced numerous hardships but has emerged as a strong advocate for girls and women's rights in her community. Her journey is a testament to resilience and the power of community support in overcoming life's challenges.

Ferista's early life was marked by significant adversity. In 2006, her parents separated, and her father remarried. This left Ferista in a difficult situation, living in a harsh environment where she felt like an orphan despite having parents. Her father, who was often absent from home, was unaware of the struggles she faced. Living under these conditions, Ferista endured many hardships that went unnoticed.

In 2014, after completing her primary education, Ferista moved to Morogoro to work as a domestic worker, earning a meager 30,000 Tanzanian shillings per month. Even this small amount was taken by her father each month, leaving her with little to no money. After three months, Ferista returned home with the hope of continuing her education. In 2015, she enrolled in Form One, but by the second year of form two, she had to drop out due to a lack of necessities. This led her into a child marriage, which further derailed her educational aspirations.

Ferista's life began to change when she became involved with the GAPE project 2021 under the Msichana Initiative. The project aimed to economically empower girls through sustainable agriculture and self-reliance while teaching them to stand against gender-based violence. Through this initiative, Ferista found her voice and began participating in various meetings and platforms dedicated to empowering girls and women in her community. She focused on raising awareness about girls' rights and encouraging them to recognize and assert their rights.

In 2023, Ferista became part of the "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project, which further strengthened her feminist ideals and leadership skills. This project provided her with the tools to lead and advocate for change. Together with a group of other girls, Ferista began pushing for government accountability and advocating for change through campaigns, community meetings, and educational programs in schools. Their efforts centered on promoting gender equality, reproductive health, and leadership among women and girls.

Today, Ferista serves as a community leader and secretary of the "Happy Family" initiative, which focuses on maternal and child nutrition in her village. Her journey from a young girl forced into child marriage to a community leader and advocate for women's rights is a powerful example of resilience and the importance of education and empowerment. Ferista continues to inspire and lead, working tirelessly to ensure that other girls and women in her community have the opportunities and support they need to thrive.



# Abigail Malila

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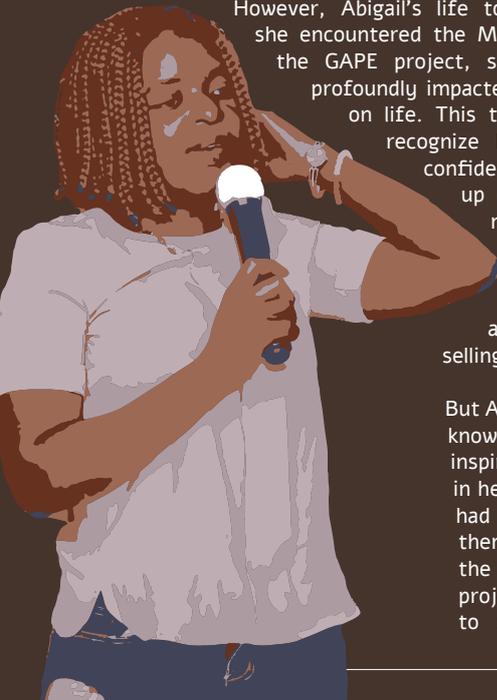
Abigail Malila, a 25-year-old from Kibaigwa Ward in Kongwa District, Dodoma Region, has transformed her life from uncertainty to leadership and empowerment. After completing her Form Four education, Abigail was unable to continue her studies due to her failure to pass the national exams. This setback left her at home, waiting for marriage as the next step in life, with no clear direction for her future.

However, Abigail's life took a positive turn when she encountered the Msichana Initiative. Through the GAPE project, she received training that profoundly impacted her mindset and outlook on life. This training empowered her to recognize her potential, build self-confidence, and refuse to give up on her dreams. With this newfound self-awareness, Abigail decided to pursue tailoring, specializing in women's clothing, and also started a small business selling second-hand clothes.

But Abigail didn't stop there. The knowledge and skills she gained inspired her to help other girls in her community who, like her, had faced challenges that led them to lose hope. Through the "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project, Abigail was motivated to form a group of young

women to discuss and address key issues such as reproductive health, leadership, and gender equality. The group aimed to bring about positive change in their community through education and advocacy.

Abigail is deeply grateful to the Msichana Initiative for the role it has played in her life. The organization has not only helped her discover her strengths and build her confidence but has also enabled her to help other girls in her community to do the same. Today, Abigail stands as a leader and an advocate, working tirelessly to empower girls and women to realize their dreams and contribute meaningfully to their communities.



# Ines Ndenlimbi

Ines Ndenlimbi Shoo, a 24-year-old from Kongwa Ward in Kongwa District, Dodoma Region, has become a significant figure in her community, advocating for the rights and well-being of girls and women. After completing her secondary education, Ines was unable to continue to college. Instead, she joined a private organization focused on educating adolescent girls and young women about sexually transmitted diseases and fighting against child marriages. Ines worked with this organization until 2023 when their contract in her district ended.

Eager to continue her mission of empowering girls and women, Ines joined the Msichana Initiative through the “Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu” project. This initiative, which aims to hold the government accountable for issues related to reproductive health, gender equality, and leadership, provided Ines with the tools and platform to make a difference in her community.

Through her involvement in the project, Ines has been able to form a group of young women focused on feminist principles and

advocating for girls’ rights. She has taken on the role of empowering these girls, helping them to understand their rights and to stand up against societal pressures that threaten their well-being. Ines is proud to be a leader who contributes significantly to the mental and social shift in her community, encouraging parents and girls alike to abandon negative stereotypes and attitudes about the importance of girls’ rights.

Ines’ work has had a tangible impact on her community, fostering an environment where the rights of girls are recognized and protected. Her efforts to educate and empower have helped to change the way people think about gender equality and the role of girls in society. Ines is proud of her contributions and remains committed to continuing her work to create a community where girls and women can thrive.

Ines Ndenlimbi Shoo’s journey from a young woman unable to continue her education to a leader and advocate for girls’ rights is a powerful example of resilience and determination. Her story inspires others to take action and work toward a society where gender equality is a reality.

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**Her efforts to educate have helped change the way people think about gender equality and the role of girls in society.**

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# Mwajuma Idrisa Hima

Mwajuma Idrisa Hima, a 21-year-old from Mabibo Ward in Dar es Salaam, is a dynamic leader and advocate for girls' rights. Despite not facing significant challenges during her school years, Mwajuma has made it her mission to empower others in her community through her various leadership roles. She is proud of her confidence and integrity, which have guided her in every aspect of her life.

As the Youth

Leader in Ubungo District and the Secretary of Youth at the CCM Mtambani Branch, Mwajuma is deeply involved in her community's political and social life. She also serves as the Secretary of the Mabibo Ward Information and Knowledge Center under the TGNP organization, where she helps disseminate important information and resources to her community.

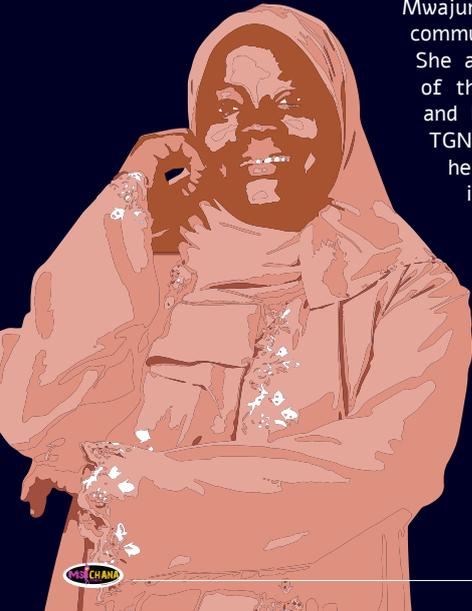
Before joining the Msichana Initiative, Mwajuma was already an active feminist and human rights advocate, although she had not yet fully recognized her potential. She was part of a group of 36 girls engaged in entrepreneurial activities such as making soap and batik

fabrics. However, it was through the "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project that Mwajuma truly came into her own. The project provided her with the training and tools to fully embrace her feminist identity and become a passionate advocate for human rights.

After attending workshops focused on self-awareness and feminism, Mwajuma committed to inspire and lead other girls. Today, her group has produced many leaders across various political and social spheres. Mwajuma uses her artistic talents to advocate for girls' rights, composing and performing poems that raise awareness about the rights of children, especially girls. Her performances have taken her to national platforms, including events organized by Pan African UN Women, TGNP, WFT, and Tai Animation.

Through her work with the Msichana Initiative, Mwajuma has gained the confidence and skills to take on significant responsibilities. She has performed at major events, including those organized by the Legal and Human Rights Center, where she has campaigned for government accountability in addressing violence against children, including cases of child murder and disappearances in Tanzania.

Mwajuma continues to lead a group of young girls who are learning the art of poetry under her guidance. Her goal is to use art as a powerful tool for advocacy, creating a safe and just society where everyone enjoys their rights. Her journey from a young feminist to a confident and influential leader is a testament to the power of self-discovery and the impact of community support.



# Mwajuma Kasiba

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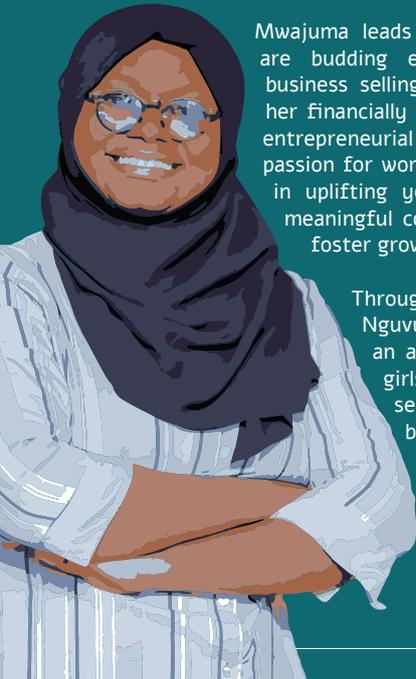
Mwajuma Kasiba, a 26-year-old from Kibada Ward in Kigamboni District, Dar es Salaam, is a passionate leader and advocate for girls' and women's rights. As a current student at Ardhi University, where she is pursuing her degree, Mwajuma balances her academic responsibilities with her role as a community leader. She is actively involved in mentoring and empowering young women in her community, focusing on leadership, gender equality, and economic empowerment.

Mwajuma leads a group of 22 girls, five of whom are budding entrepreneurs. She runs an online business selling perfumes, which not only supports her financially but also serves as an example of the entrepreneurial spirit she encourages in others. Her passion for working with the community, particularly in uplifting young girls, drives her to engage in meaningful conversations and idea exchanges that foster growth and change.

Through her involvement in the "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project, Mwajuma has taken an active role in organizing sessions with girls in her community. During these sessions, they discuss various issues, build leadership skills, promote gender equality, and motivate each other to achieve economic independence. By empowering these young women, Mwajuma helps them avoid falling victim to gender-based violence and other societal challenges.

Mwajuma's vision for the future is clear. After completing her degree, she aspires to become a prominent leader in Tanzania, particularly in the areas of women's and children's rights. She is determined to use her education and leadership skills to combat gender-based violence, with a specific focus on reducing online gender violence.

Mwajuma Kasiba's journey from an online entrepreneur to a community leader and advocate for girls' rights exemplifies her commitment to creating a better and safer society. Her work not only impacts those she mentors but also sets a strong foundation for her future ambitions to lead and make a significant difference in Tanzania.



# Angela Laban

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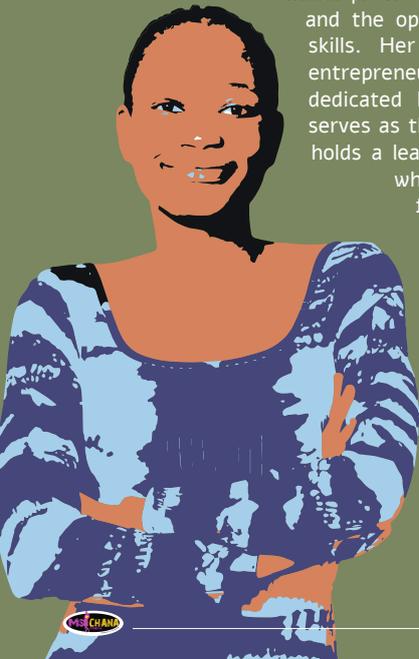
Angela Laban, a 20-year-old from Hananasif Ward in Kinondoni District, Dar es Salaam, is a young leader and entrepreneur with a deep commitment to her community. Currently a student at the Institute of Social Work, Angela balances her academic responsibilities with her entrepreneurial endeavors and leadership roles.

Angela runs a small business selling undergarments, which provides her with financial independence and the opportunity to develop her business skills. Her leadership extends beyond her entrepreneurial activities; she is also a dedicated leader in her church, where she serves as the choir leader. In addition, Angela holds a leadership role within her household, where she helps guide and support her family.

Despite her young age, Angela has already demonstrated a strong capacity for leadership and a passion for community service. Her involvement in various leadership roles has equipped her with the skills and confidence needed to inspire and lead others. Angela is committed to using her talents and influence to make a positive

impact on her community, especially among young women who look up to her as a role model.

Angela's journey as a leader and entrepreneur showcases her determination to succeed and her desire to contribute to the well-being of her community. She continues to strive for excellence in all her endeavors, whether in her studies, her business, or her leadership roles, and she is poised to make an even greater impact in the future



# Rahima Ismail

Rahima Ismail Bakali, a 19-year-old from Dar es Salaam, has faced numerous challenges on her educational journey, but her resilience and determination have led her to become a young leader and advocate for girls' rights.

Rahima's life took a difficult turn when her parents separated, placing a heavy burden on her mother to provide for the family. Due to financial constraints and the challenges of commuting in Dar es Salaam, Rahima was sent to live with her grandmother in Tanga so she could continue her education. Despite these difficulties, she completed her Form Four education.

After finishing secondary school, Rahima's mother found her a job as a domestic worker in Zanzibar. However, just as she was preparing to leave for Zanzibar, Rahima was introduced to the Binti Makini organization. This organization was looking for young women in the community who wanted to develop their skills in various fields. Given Rahima's dream of becoming an early childhood teacher, she saw this as a golden opportunity. With her mother's support, Rahima joined the selection process.

Rahima's potential as a leader was soon recognized, especially through her participation in a play that focused on gender-based violence. In this play,

she took on the lead role, portraying a girl who had to leave school due to a forced child marriage, a situation influenced by her parents. This powerful performance not only showcased her acting talent but also highlighted the critical issues facing girls in her community.

Through this experience, Rahima found her voice as an educator and advocate. She began educating her community and other girls in her ward about the dangers of gender-based violence and the importance of staying in school. Her dedication led to her becoming a young leader through the "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project, where she actively participates in campaigns aimed at driving positive change in her community.



# Rahima Hassan

stories of  
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Rahima's journey from a girl facing the possibility of early marriage to a leader advocating for girls' rights is a testament to her strength and determination. She continues to work tirelessly to empower other girls, ensuring they have the opportunities and support needed to pursue their dreams and avoid the challenges she has overcome. Rahma Hassan Kulita, a 20-year-old from Mbagala Kuu Ward in Temeke District, Dar es Salaam, is a young leader who is dedicated to making a positive impact in her community. Although she currently lives with her family and works as a tailor, Rahma has taken on a significant leadership role in her neighborhood.

Every Sunday, Rahma leads a group of young women who come together to discuss critical issues such as family planning and the prevention of teenage pregnancies. Through these meetings, Rahma and her group address the challenges that many girls in their community face, offering support and guidance to help them make informed decisions about their lives.

While Rahma may not have a dramatic personal story to share, her commitment

to community service speaks volumes. She has created a safe space for young women to talk about their experiences and learn from one another, fostering a sense of empowerment and solidarity.

Rahma's work as a tailor provides her with financial independence, but it is her role as a community leader that truly defines her. By organizing and leading discussions on important issues, she is helping to change the lives of the girls in her community, ensuring that they have the knowledge and support they need to avoid early pregnancies and make choices that will benefit their futures.

Rahma Hassan Kulita's dedication to her community and her efforts to educate and empower other young women make her a vital force for change in Mbagala Kuu. She continues to inspire others with her leadership and commitment to creating a better future for all.



# Sophia Salum

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Sophia Salum, a 24-year-old from Dunda Ward in Bagamoyo District, Pwani Region, has navigated a challenging journey to become an advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment in her community. Despite facing setbacks in her educational path, Sophia has found strength and purpose through her work as a tailor and community organizer.

Sophia completed her Form Four education in 2017 but unfortunately did not pass her exams, which meant she couldn't continue her studies. This was a difficult moment for her, as she had always dreamed of pursuing further education. The situation was compounded by the fact that she was not living close to her parents, and her guardians were not attentive to her academic progress. With little support to continue her education, Sophia had no choice but to leave school and enter the workforce.

Determined to build a future for herself, Sophia turned to small businesses and eventually learned the skill of tailoring. Her passion for sewing led her to form a group of young women who, like her, were involved in tailoring. This group became a platform for mutual support and skill development.

Through the "Sauti Yetu, Nguvu Yetu" project, Sophia has been able to take her efforts a step further. She now actively encourages and educates other girls in her community about gender equality, leadership, and reproductive health. Although she does not hold any formal leadership position in the government, Sophia's influence within her community is undeniable. She works tirelessly to inspire young girls to participate in leadership roles and to understand the importance of their reproductive health.

Sophia Salum's story is one of resilience and empowerment. Despite the challenges she faced in her education, she has created a meaningful life by turning her skills and experiences into tools for community change. Her dedication to helping other girls in her community reflects her commitment to creating a more equitable society, where girls and women are empowered to lead and make informed decisions about their lives.

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**Although she does not hold any formal leadership position in the government, Sophia's influence within her community is undeniable.**

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