Longitudinal Descriptive Results from the Siyakha Youth Assets for Employability Study: Effects of the Combined Employability and Financial Capability Program

SUMMARY
In this brief, we examine the effects of a combined youth employability and financial capability program on money management skills. The data show that a slightly higher proportion of youth who received the combined employability and financial inclusion program (or the treatment group) reported better money management skills (saving and spending) compared to youth that received the employability program only (or the control group). We also explore whether the combined program had any spillover effects on employment outcomes.

About Siyakha Youth Assets

Siyakha Youth Assets was a longitudinal, cluster-randomized study implemented in South Africa between 2015 and 2019. Siyakha's primary research objective was to examine the causal impacts of youth employment and financial inclusion programs on financial capabilities, employability, and longer-term employment effects for South African youth. The study was conducted by the Global Social Development Innovations at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Centre for Social Development in Africa at the University of Johannesburg, in partnership with eight organizations providing youth employability programs in South Africa.

The full baseline and endline reports for the Siyakha Youth Assets for Employability study are available at gsdi.unc.edu.

GSDI GLOBAL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT INNOVATIONS Innovate • Evaluate • Disseminate | UNC SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK | Siyakha Youth Assets | CSDA Knowledge Application Innovation CENTRE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA | UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

This brief is part of a series of research briefs on longitudinal descriptive findings from the Siyakha Youth Assets for Employability Study. Siyakha was supported by the Ford Foundation, the Jobs Fund (South Africa Siyasebenza), the South African National Youth Development Agency, and the University of Johannesburg.

Methods

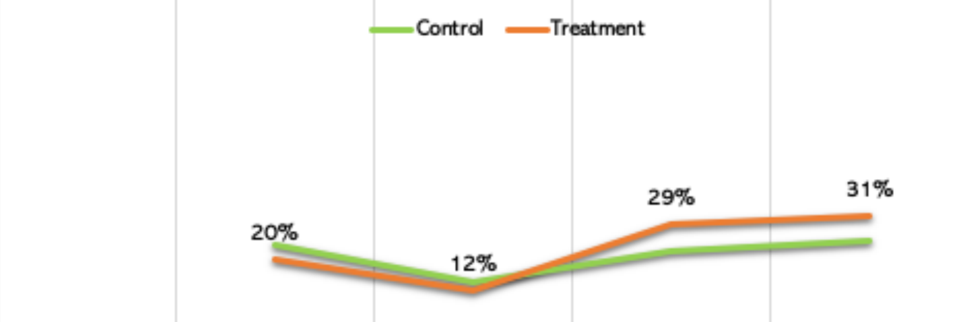
A total of 1,974 youth participated in Siyakha across the eight implementing partner organizations and their 44 training sites across the country. Data were collected at four time points, including before program participation (baseline), as participants were exiting the program, and two follow-ups at 9 and 18 months after program completion.

Our primary measures of financial capability related to how participants plan their spending and whether they were successful in saving money. Our primary measures of employment included rates of current employment and take-home pay.

Figures presented in this brief are based on simple descriptive characteristics—within-group means and proportions—that characterize how the treatment cohort compared to the control cohort differ over time on various outcomes of interest.

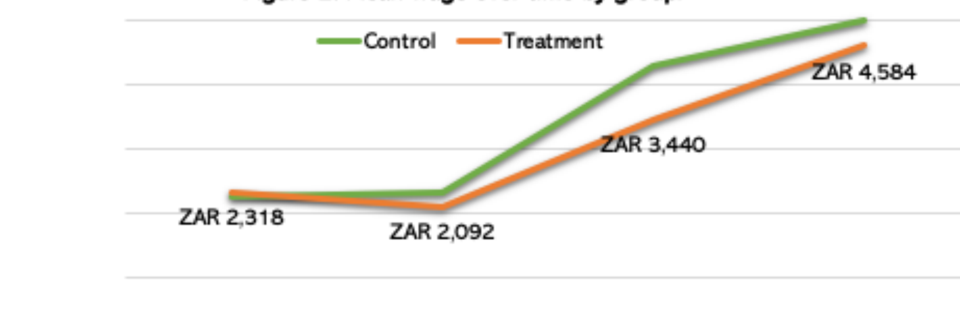
Results

Figure 1. Proportion of participants employed over time by group.



	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Control	0.24	0.14	0.22	0.25
Treatment	0.2	0.12	0.29	0.31

Figure 2. Mean wage over time by group.



	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Control	2249	2314	4289	4993
Treatment	2318	2092	3440	4584

Employment

Slightly more youth in the treatment group (6% points) were employed at nine (Wave 3) and 18 months (Wave 4) after program completion compared to youth in the control group (Figure 1).

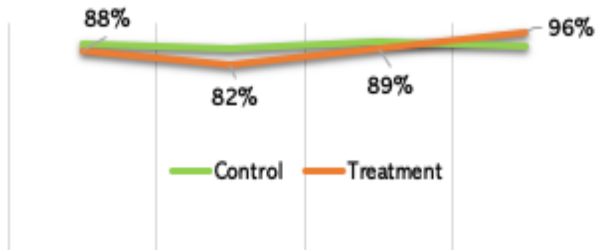
We found no effect on participants' wages. Youth in the experimental group earned virtually the same at baseline (Wave 1) as did their counterparts in the control group. Eighteen months after program completion (Wave 4), members of the control group were earning slightly more, on average, than youth in the treatment group (see Figure 2).

Financial Capability

The effects of the combined intervention on financial literacy outcomes were mixed. On measures that tested knowledge of core financial concepts such as financial interest, those in the treatment group did not consistently score higher than the control group at Wave 4 follow-up. In terms of planning their spending, participants who received the combined intervention were slightly more likely to plan their spending at Wave 4 (see Figure 3), though this trend was not consistent over time.

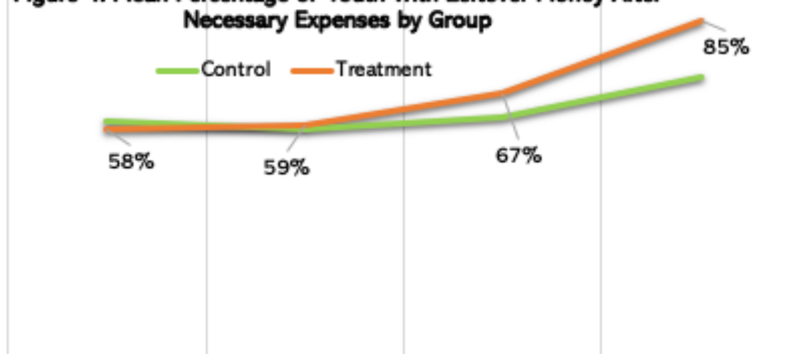
However, there did appear to be a temporally consistent effect on spending habits, with participants who received the combined intervention being markedly more likely (14 percentage points) to report having money left over after necessary expenses than were their control group counterparts (see Figure 4).

Figure 3. Mean percentage of youth reporting planning their spending by group



	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Control	0.91	0.89	0.92	0.9
Treatment	0.88	0.82	0.89	0.96

Figure 4. Mean Percentage of Youth With Leftover Money After Necessary Expenses by Group



	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Control	0.6	0.58	0.61	0.71
Treatment	0.58	0.59	0.67	0.85

Discussion and Next Steps

Changes in participants' employment and financial capability characteristics between baseline and 18 months after program completion reflect lasting effects that may be a result of the intervention. However, the combination intervention was not associated with a substantial effect on employment and had no discernible effect on wages among all participants. In terms of financial capability, the results were more promising, with the treatment group reporting a higher likelihood of planning their spending and having money left over after necessary expenses.

Further analysis may help to explain to whom the benefits of this intervention accrued, as well as why the treatment group did not, overall, perform better than the control group on many financial capability constructs. For example, there may have been differential effects on various subgroups of youth (e.g., among female participants, among those in urban communities, or among those who had lower levels of education) that were not examined here.

This brief was prepared by William Curran-Groome and Rainier Masa.
William Curran-Groome: Data Curation, Formal Analysis, and Writing–Original Draft Preparation.
Rainier Masa: Supervision and Writing–Review and Editing

Suggested citation: Global Social Development Innovations (GSDI) and Centre for Social Development in Africa (CSDA). (2020). Longitudinal descriptive results from the Siyakha study: Effects of the combined employability and financial capability program. Chapel Hill, N.C. and Johannesburg, South Africa: GSDI, the University of North Caroli-na at Chapel Hill and CSDA, University of Johannesburg.