

CASE STUDY:

Sharon Kinyatta

Professional Driver Training Uganda project Phase Two (PDTU-2)

The Professional Driver Training Uganda project Phase Two (PDTU-2), which is part of the GIZ E4D programme, aims to upskill drivers to take advantage of employment opportunities, while equipping them with the knowledge to be safer on Uganda's roads.

“I intend to become one of the most competent drivers in Uganda, and to prove that driving HGVs is possible for everyone as long as you have passion and drive.”

Growing up with just her father, Sharon watched him do a lot of things that were considered to be for men only, particularly when it came to driving.

“When he drove me to school, I would sit in the front and enjoy watching him handle the vehicle controls.”

Sharon's first job was in marketing. Using her initial salary, she went to a driving school to get her first permit.

“I wanted to be a professional driver to make my father proud, to be more like him, to become a more competent driver, and to learn more. I thought I will save up and go to a driving school to become a safer driver.”

When Sharon started training at Safe Way Right Way Driver Training Centre, she learnt to be patient and use the road with other people.

“At first, driving a truck in Uganda can be scary as you have boda bodas [motorcycles] coming out from every corner, and there are often pedestrians on the road.

“However, at Safe Way Right Way the first thing you are taught is that safety begins with us, so we learn how to be careful, consistent with speed, and when to slow down. I must be the good driver. If someone wants to rush, let them rush, but I will not cause any hazards or crashes, and I will use my mirrors.

“The training at Safe Way Right Way was the best experience I have ever had in my life. At my first driving school the training was very basic, but the trainers at Safe Way Right Way will sit down with you right from the start. They will teach you the theory, everything about the vehicle, and what to expect on the road.

“Later, you will have the practical training where they will be by your side, and teach you the mechanics and how the vehicle operates.

“It is a steady process, and soon you will find yourself independently driving with them watching you. They will make you sure you are using your mirrors, driving at a good speed, and doing what you have been taught.

“When I drive people they thank me, praising me for driving so well - it is a good feeling.

“When I was first called to do the Class C training, and then later called to progress, I was so grateful.

“I am now driving the biggest vehicles – the trucks, and it is such a blessing.”

As part of the PDTU-2’s commitment to finding employment opportunities for the trainees, Sharon was sent for an assessment at Hima Cement which she passed.

“At Hima I will be on the road with people who are more advanced than me, and with vehicles I haven’t driven before. The Renault vehicle is new technology, so we must go for training and learn how to use it.

“I will be transporting goods for Hima Cement to different areas around Uganda.

“I am looking forward to driving my truck safely, getting the goods to my consignor, and then returning to my boss and handing back the keys, with the vehicle in good condition, and the job done.

“In the future, I would like to travel to Canada or the UK, and drive more advanced trucks.”

Sharon’s father is proud of her, but can’t believe that she is a professional driver.

“He is an old man, so he still sees it as a man’s job.”

People often say to Sharon, “you’re small, can your feet touch those pedals? Isn’t the steering wheel too big for you?”

Sharon made it clear that such comments will not stop her determination to prove that driving Heavy Goods Vehicles is possible for everyone if you have the passion and the commitment.

“It is challenging to work in such a male dominated industry. A lot of men feel that we are taking their jobs, but I have had a passion for driving and vehicles since early childhood, so I am not scared. We can share the road, and the work, together.

“To another woman considering whether to undertake the training, I would say that it might look challenging but it is not. It is about your mindset, and having a passion for vehicles. If you listen to the instructor, you practice, and ask questions, it will turn out to be something very enjoyable.

“We should not take this training for granted. We need to go out there and make our instructors proud, we have been given the chance, so we must do the best we can.”

