



**International Day of
Women and Girls in Science**

**“Girls need to be encouraged and supported to achieve their full potential.”
Wiló, Masters Student and 1st Class Honors Graduate.**

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The International Day of Women and Girls in Science is a global event commemorated on 11th February. This is in recognition of the role of women and girls in science, not only as beneficiaries, but also as agents of change.

WIK programming includes advancing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education for women and girls, an investment that seeks to empower them and their communities to improve social and economic outcomes and broaden their future prospects.

To commemorate this day, WIK is spotlighting inspirational success stories of women & girl beneficiaries in STEM.

Shattering Glass Ceilings: The Story of Wiló, a WIK Top Achiever and Alumna

We recently caught up with Wiló Abdi Awil at the UoN where she is undertaking her Master’s Degree in Economics. WIK supported Wiló on scholarship for Undergraduate studies at the same University where she graduated top of her class with 1st Class Honors Degree in Economics and Statistics.

Wiló, a refugee from Somalia is the epitome of resilience, who through her achievements, is challenging gender stereotypes in STEM.

Looking back at her early years, Wiló talked about fleeing Somalia and settling in Kakuma Refugee Camp.

“We left Mogadishu, our hometown in Somalia, in search of a better life and more so for me, in search of education. Young and ambitious, all I needed was an opportunity to go to school, for someone to believe in my dreams and my potential!”

In 2008, Wiló made way to Kenya’s Kakuma Refugee Camp, located in North-Western region of Kenya, where her education journey began.



"I immediately joined a Primary School and was enrolled in Class 5 .My goal was to excel in school and pursue my dreams of accessing tertiary education."

As a girl, this was not going to be easy for Wilo as she had to deal with obstacles that stood in the way of achieving these dreams.

"Girls are disadvantaged at all stages of education, more so girls in emergency settings. We are faced with barriers including lack of investment by families, discriminatory treatment and pressures to marry as children. For girls like me who choose to set off on STEM careers, we have to work even harder to deal with the gender bias and stereotyping that comes with it."

When asked about overcoming these struggles to become a top achiever in a STEM education, Wilo reckons,

"It starts with your mindset. Having a positive mindset opens your mind to all possibilities making it easier to achieve your goals."

Personally, one of those goals was to pursue my passion for Science and Mathematics. Throughout my schooling experience, I was constantly dealing with stereotypes about Sciences being perceived as 'masculine' subjects. I had to prove that as a girl, I too deserved an opportunity to learn, achieve and excel in STEM.

Besides self-will, girls need female role models to help boost their motivation and engagement with STEM or education in general."

Wilo also talked about how the tertiary education scholarship through WIK is one of the highlights of her achievements so far.

"During my undergraduate scholarship application, I was not limited to which course I could or could not do because of my gender. WIK believed in my abilities and allowed me to pursue Economics and Statistics, my course of choice. Graduating top of my class with 1st Class honors is proof that girls can compete and perform at the highest levels, when given the chance.

I was also fortunate to benefit from WIK's mentorship and career coaching forums which offered the much needed support and motivation.

Talking about why STEM education is important for girls, Wilo observed that through STEM education, girls acquire skills that position them for equal participation. She believes that it is time for women and girls to be liberated from patriarchal expectations and pressure and get equal support and opportunities.

Wilo exudes confidence as she talks about her current and future plans.

"I am currently pursuing Masters in Economics at the University of Nairobi, under the African Economic Research Consortium scholarship. This is a big step for me as a scholar that is determined to study up to PHD level even as I look forward to forging a successful career in the field.

I hope to mentor, inspire and role-model girls like me as I am passionate about advocating for full and equal access and participation for women and girls in STEM.

There are no solutions for girls without girls."





No.10 Amboseli Road, Off Gitanga Road, Lavington
P.O. Box 40521-00100 Nairobi
Mobile +254 721 551 451, Email: windle@windle.org
Website: www.windle.org