

#She Rises

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MID-TERM IMPACT REPORT 2023-2025

Project for the socio-economic empowerment of rural women and girls who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence in and around mining sites in South Kivu, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

May, 2025



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Acronyms

- DRC** : Democratic Republic of Congo
- GBV** : Gender Based Violence
- IGAs** : Income-Generating Activities
- LC** : Listening Clubs
- MMA**s : MKAAJI’s Mobile Agronomists
- RWLC**s : Rural Women’s Leadership Centres
- SGBV** : Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
- SWVC**s : Schools Without Violence Clubs
- VSLA** : Village Savings and Loan Associations





Foreword

She Rises. This title carries with it hope, strength and light. It tells the quiet courage of hundreds of rural women and girls in South Kivu who, after enduring the unimaginable, choose to rise. To rebuild. To reclaim their voice and dignity. In a region deeply affected by decades of conflict, displacement and injustice, where sexual and gender-based violence remains painfully persistent, particularly around mining sites, this project offers renewed hope and possibility.

Led by MKAAJI MPYA asbl with the support of **The Circle NGO**, the Socioeconomic Empowerment Project for Rural Women and Girls Survivors of SGBV in the territories of Kabare and Kalehe reflects the organisation's commitment to building inclusive, resilient rural development grounded in human rights and community engagement. More than a response to a crisis, this project represents a collective journey of recovery, healing and reconstruction. It is a hand extended to those long left in the margins, a sign that change is possible even in the most fragile settings.

Between October 2023 and March 2025, more than 180 women and 350 girls were directly supported through the Rural Women's Leadership Centres (RWLC) and Schools Without Violence Clubs (SWVC). In these safe and empowering spaces, they regained confidence, developed new skills, started small businesses and found their voice. With support from MKAAJI's Mobile Agronomists (MMAs), many were able to launch sustainable income-generating activities adapted to their local realities. Incomes rose, fear receded and voices were heard. And across households, schools and mining communities, violence began to retreat and new dynamics of solidarity emerged. This report captures that transformation. It outlines the context in which the project emerged, the methodology used, the results achieved, the challenges encountered and the prospects for sustainability. It is also a living record, enriched with moving testimonies from those who chose to rise. From those who, despite the pain, now move forward with courage and pride.

Created as both a tool for accountability and a call to action, *She Rises* is a clear statement. As long as women rise, there is hope. And each initiative that helps restore their dignity brings us one step closer to a just world where equality, safety and peace are not distant ideals but shared and lived realities.

Mrs Esther Bizuri Mubalama,
President of the Board of Directors,
MKAAJI MPYA asbl





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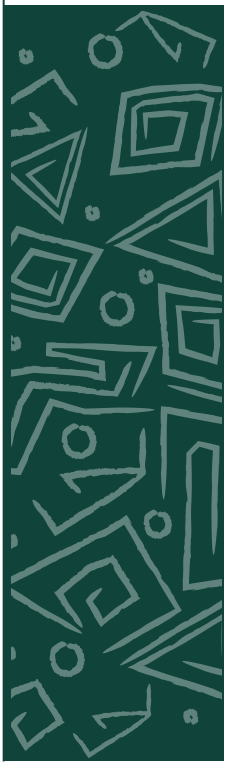
We express our deepest gratitude to **Global Feminism in Solidarity and Action | The Circle**, whose generous and ongoing funding continues to make the implementation of this project possible. Thanks to this committed support, hundreds of rural women and girls have gained access to opportunities for empowerment, protection, and sustainable transformation.

Our thanks also go to all the teams and partners who contributed to the development of this version of She Rises. In particular, we acknowledge the dedication of the Department of Gender, Peace and Humanitarian Affairs for their strategic and operational support throughout the process.

We warmly thank the Project Manager, the Communications Officer, our research associates, as well as the Coordinators of the Listening Clubs and the Rural Women’s Leadership Centres (RWLC) for their technical contributions, careful review, and essential field anchoring that lend credibility to this document.

Our appreciation also extends to the schools directly involved in the project for their active collaboration, as well as to the teachers, students, local trainers, and community leaders who shared their experiences and testimonies with sincerity.

Finally, we express our heartfelt recognition to all the women, girls, and beneficiary communities whose stories of courage and resilience have inspired the core of this initiative. She Rises is their voice, their mark, and their movement.





A training session for women on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), focusing on understanding its roots, consequences, and strategies to combat it. Through open dialogue and empowerment tools, participants explore ways to protect themselves, support others, and advocate for a violence-free community.





Project Context

In the mining areas of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), economic hardship forces many women and young girls to exchange sexual relations for money, food, or a place in the mining exploitation chain. Around these mining sites, informal markets and leisure venues have developed where women and girls are particularly exposed to trafficking, sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse. Mining communities, predominantly male-dominated, reinforce gender inequalities and normalise violence against women. Artisanal mine workers often operate without legal protection or recognition, while displaced or orphaned young girls, as well as women traders and service providers, remain extremely vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation in this hostile environment.

The territories of Kabare and Kalehe in South Kivu province have for several years been the scene of intense mining activity marked by informality, corruption, lack of regulation, and armed greed. These areas, rich in strategic minerals such as coltan, gold, and cassiterite, attract the interests of many actors, often operating outside any legal framework. In a context of chronic instability, this chaotic exploitation rarely benefits local communities. On the contrary, it feeds corruption networks, fosters the presence of armed groups, and exacerbates the resurgence of community and identity conflicts. These territories become lawless spaces where violence prevails over justice, and where the most vulnerable, especially women and children, are the primary targets.

In this chaotic environment, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has become a systemic tool of control, punishment, and domination. These acts are neither accidental nor isolated; they are deliberately used as weapons of war and instruments of terror in a conflict that often goes unacknowledged. Women and girls are systematically targeted on the paths leading to gold panning sites, in markets, camps, households, and even within schools. Many endure these violences in silence, paralysed by fear, trapped by social stigma, or faced with a complete institutional vacuum. Medical and judicial structures are often absent, inaccessible, corrupt, or inadequate. As a result, the majority of survivors do not report the abuses, and perpetrators act with near-total impunity.



In addition to physical and psychological violence, there is also structural precariousness. Life in these mining communities is marked by limited or even non-existent access to basic services such as healthcare, food, education, clean water, and decent housing. Women, often heads of households out of necessity or abandonment, must cope with extreme realities. For many, the choices boil down to a cruel dilemma: endure in order to survive. School dropout rates among girls are massive, domestic violence is trivialised, and on mining sites, many women and young girls are forced to accept risky jobs, often associated with disguised forms of exploitation or abuse. Around mining sites, harassment and sexual abuse committed by miners on the way to work, teachers, or older students are frequent, rarely reported, and almost never punished. This culture of impunity, deeply rooted in patriarchal social norms, helps perpetuate the cycle of intergenerational violence.

Faced with this reality that is both unjust and normalised, an urgent, multidimensional response deeply anchored in local realities was necessary.

It is from this perspective that MKAAJI MPYA asbl designed and implemented an innovative socioeconomic empowerment project for rural women and girls, particularly those who have survived sexual violence or live in high-risk contexts in and around mining sites. Far from offering top-down or temporary solutions, this project aims to create lasting transformational dynamics by relying on communities themselves as the main agents of change.

The creation of the Rural Women's Leadership Centres (RWLC) forms one of the core elements of this strategy. These centres provide safe spaces where women can receive training, share experiences, heal, and rebuild their lives. They foster the emergence of strong rural female leadership, capable of addressing root inequalities and mobilising local resources. At the same time, the establishment of Schools Without Violence Clubs (SWVC) in educational institutions raises awareness among young people from an early age, promotes equal relationships between boys and girls, and breaks the taboos surrounding sexual violence in schools. The project also includes the creation of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), real financial alternatives for women excluded from the formal banking system. These community-managed, solidarity-based structures enable participants to save, access small loans, and develop income-generating activities (IGAs) adapted to their context. Supporting these initiatives, MKAAJI MPYA's Mobile Agronomists provide targeted and practical technical assistance on the ground, helping to improve agricultural practices, optimise resources, and strengthen the economic autonomy of beneficiaries.

Beyond economic outcomes, this project primarily aims to restore the dignity, confidence, and safety of women and girls. By strengthening their capacities, facilitating access to resources, and building a network of local solidarity, MKAAJI MPYA's intervention contributes to breaking the cycle of violence, rebuilding viable life paths, and fostering collective resilience.

This is not only about protection; it is about rebuilding, empowering, and sowing seeds of hope in hostile environments, carried by those most affected. Where fear once prevailed, the strength to act now grows.





Women and girls beneficiaries, including vendors, entrepreneurs, farmers, and students, actively participating in the agricultural fair in Kalehe, led by Rural Women's Leadership Centres (RWLCs) and Schools Without Violence Clubs (SWVCs). They showcase their products, share experiences, and highlight their commitment to economic empowerment and social change.



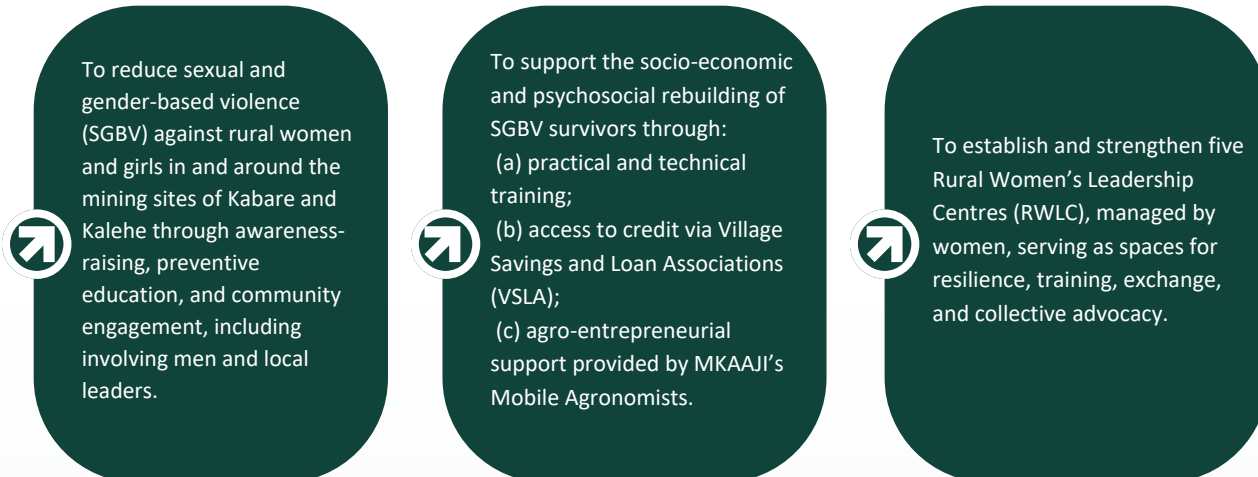
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Project Objective

To contribute to the empowerment of rural women and girls survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in and around mining sites, through income-generating activities, capacity building (leadership, rights, violence prevention), and increased participation in local decision-making bodies, including in conflict and post-conflict contexts in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Specific Objectives



OUT PUT 1: 350 girls supported and accompanied, 5 violence-free school clubs active in 5 secondary schools in Kabare and Kalehe, prevention and reduction of sexual violence, pupils and teachers involved in preventing and combating gender-based violence in schools in and around mining sites.

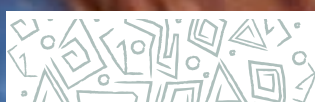
OUT PUT 2: +180 women have been trained, resulting in a doubling of their incomes. Seven Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) are now fully operational, with microcredit loans granted to support women's economic activities. An agricultural fair was organized, leading to a doubling of women's incomes overall, and up to a sevenfold increase for members of the RWLCs. During the fair, more than 500 people were sensitized to the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in and around mining sites. As a result, over 180 women have been empowered and are actively serving as mentors and leaders within their communities.

OUT PUT 3: 5 Rural Women's Leadership Centres (RWLCs) have been established as safe spaces for resilience, training, exchange, and advocacy, engaging over 180 women and members of rural communities. Furthermore, 3 community dialogues were held, bringing together more than 250 local leaders, authorities, courts, tribunals, police, and community representatives to prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in and around mining sites, while providing ongoing support to the RWLCs.





A training session on income-generating activities taking place in Mishebere. Women gather attentively, guided by a local trainer, learning practical skills to boost their economic autonomy and support their families through sustainable small businesses.





Implementation Approach

At the beginning, there were these silent women, sitting in a circle under a mango tree, others in the fields, tired hands holding worn-out cloths, their gazes often cast downward. Many had experienced violence, and some still suffered in silence. It was in this simple yet hopeful setting that the idea was born: to create an approach rooted in their lived experience, one that respects their voices and, above all, believes in their capacity to change their circumstances.

The project's methodological approach is therefore not the result of an imported model or a technical formula. It emerged from patient listening, deep local grounding, and a conviction that women and girls, when supported with dignity and intelligence, are best placed to transform their own living conditions. It combines several levers : economic, educational, and social, to enable women, girls, and their communities to become active agents of their own resilience once again.

The project is based on an integrated, participatory, and community-led approach, designed to foster sustainable transformation in rural areas facing significant social, economic, and security challenges. Far from being imposed from outside, this approach is rooted in the community dynamics themselves, mobilising women, youth, local leaders, and educational structures around concrete and transformative initiatives.

At the heart of this strategy are the Rural Women's Leadership Centres (RWLC). These spaces, conceived as platforms for learning, solidarity, and empowerment, provide a structured environment where rural women can meet, learn, undertake projects, and rebuild their lives. Each RWLC is led by experienced community trainers, technically supported by MKAJI MPYA's Mobile Agronomists who provide close, context-adapted assistance tailored to local realities on the ground.

These centres go beyond providing technical training. Above all, they are places where women's voices are valued, and where beneficiaries gradually gain confidence, leadership, and autonomy. With ongoing support, women trained at the Rural Women's Leadership Centres (RWLC) launch relevant income-generating activities, often in the sectors of subsistence agriculture, artisanal processing, or small local trade. The impact is quickly visible: increased agricultural yields, better resource management, stabilised household incomes, and, most importantly, a shift in attitude : women feel capable, visible, and heard.

One of the pillars of this approach is the promotion of agricultural entrepreneurship, particularly for women affected by violence or economic exclusion. Supported in the field by specialised technicians, beneficiaries acquire skills in sustainable production, post-harvest management, and marketing. This practical approach allows for rapid and visible capacity building: beneficiaries generate higher incomes and improve their food security, while strengthening their local economic integration. Demonstration plots and collective micro-projects facilitate peer-to-peer knowledge transfer and foster a spirit of mutual aid that transcends social status or past traumas. It is not just about cultivating the land, but about reinvesting dignity through work and rebuilding a future after hardship.

The strategy also integrates Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), which are a key lever for economic empowerment. These member-managed structures facilitate access to small, flexible loans ranging from 200 to 3,000 USD to finance individual or collective economic activities.

Thanks to these associations, many women are able to start or expand their income-generating activities, invest in their children's education, or improve their housing. This decentralised financial inclusion is essential in contexts where banks are absent and women have limited access to formal credit.





Because violence cannot be tackled solely within homes or markets, the project incorporates an early prevention system in schools through the Schools Without Violence Clubs (SWVC). These clubs, established in primary and secondary schools, are run by trained teachers in collaboration with parent committees and local education authorities. They serve as channels to raise students' awareness of human rights, gender equality, and non-violence. The intergenerational dialogue they promote, involving students, parents, and teachers, helps create a calmer, more respectful, and protective school environment, especially for girls. By reducing violent behaviours from an early age, the SWVC contribute to breaking the cycles of violence reproduction in rural communities and around mining sites.

The methodological approach is also supported by community advocacy activities, organised as forums, dialogues with traditional leaders, or public awareness campaigns. These platforms are vital for mobilising local opinion, influencing social norms, and embedding the fight against violence and inequality sustainably. Rather than advocating in abstract terms, these dialogues are grounded in concrete results led by the women themselves, who become ambassadors of change. By involving men, youth, and local authorities in these processes, the approach ensures broad buy-in and genuine community ownership.

Ultimately, this approach has not only generated income or stabilised households. It has awakened voices, built bridges across generations, and above all, brought forth women who have become, in many cases, inspiring figures in their villages.

In Chulwe, Kabare a former survivor turned trainer now teaches other women about community savings. In Mishebere, students from the Schools Without Violence Club (SWVC) jointly drafted a code of conduct against school violence, now displayed in all classrooms.

These signs of change, sometimes subtle but profound, show that transformation cannot be decreed; it must be accompanied with respect, commitment, and patience.

This approach has succeeded here because it was co-created with and for those who had been forgotten for too long.



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A beneficiary takes advantage of the agricultural fair to raise public awareness about gender-based violence. She passionately engages with visitors, sharing information, selling her farm products, and distributing educational materials, using the event's visibility to amplify her important message.

Key Results and Impacts

To date, the results speak for themselves, the fruits of an approach deeply rooted in reality and driven by the community.

At the heart of this transformation, +180 women have been trained and supported within the Rural Women's Leadership Centres (RWLC). Thanks to this structured support, they have acquired skills in management, sustainable agriculture, local processing, and leadership. This approach has led to an average income increase of over 60%, with some women seeing their earnings double or even triple. Many have not only improved their economic situation but have also become mentors, trainers, or inspirational figures within their communities.

More than 350 girls have been supported through the RWLC and Schools Without Violence Clubs (SWVC). In the five partner schools, these clubs have conducted educational and preventive activities, resulting in a tangible decrease in violent behaviours and improved access to education. As a result, the retention rate of girls in school has increased by more than 17%, reflecting a safer and more inclusive environment. Over five psychosocial support sessions have enabled several adolescent girls to rebuild their lives after traumatic experiences.

Economically, seven Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) are fully operational, facilitating access to microcredits ranging from 200 to 3,000 USD. These solidarity funds have enabled the launch or expansion of micro-enterprises, agricultural projects, and commercial services led by women. This financial inclusion, adapted to the rural context, represents a sustainable lever for resilience and independence.



The project has also focused on enhancing the visibility and recognition of local initiatives through the organisation of an agricultural fair. This event brought together rural women survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), local authorities, performing artists, young female entrepreneurs, and civil society members to promote products from women-led activities and strengthen local food security. In the mining areas of Lushebere, Nyamukubi, Nindja, and Kambululu, interventions have led to a measured reduction in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). This improvement results from several factors: awareness-raising through the Schools Without Violence Clubs (SWVC), economic empowerment, but above all, three large-scale community forums that gathered over 250 participants, including local authorities, court and tribunal officials, police officers, religious leaders, civil society members, and youth. These forums helped break the silence, document violence, trigger public commitments, and strengthen local accountability.

Despite these significant advances, challenges remain substantial. The intervention areas remain vulnerable to tensions, patriarchal backlashes, structural poverty, and weak institutional mechanisms. The sustainability of the changes initiated will depend on the continued engagement of communities, the consolidation of achievements, and strengthened support from public authorities and partners. However, in these territories long marginalised, momentum has been set in motion. The upliftment of women, the education of girls, the awakening of consciousness, and the embedding of new solidarities are breathing new life into forgotten villages. Where fear and silence once prevailed, voices are now rising organised, confident, and determined to make change a lasting reality.



Beneficiary Testimonials

Testimonies from Women Beneficiaries (RWLCs):

“

I didn't know I could farm for anything beyond survival. Thanks to the training I received and the support from the agronomists, my fields now yield ten times more, and I sell everything at the market. I was able to send my daughter to school.

Nora, 29, Kalehe

”

“

I used to live in fear. Today, I speak at village meetings. I was elected to our local committee. It is at the RWLC that I learned to earn respect.

Nyota, 33, Kalehe

”

“

My life changed thanks to the VSLA. I run a small seed business and train other women in saving. We no longer depend on our husbands for everything or on the destructive activities around the mining sites.

Alphonsine, 27, Kabare

”

“

I returned to my land and left behind the mines that took my body and soul. The agronomists helped me diversify my production. With the fairs, I sell my vegetables and now I am heard.

Aline, 38, Kalehe

”



Testimonials from Girls (SWVC)

“

The SWVC helped me understand that what I went through was not my fault. Today, I help other girls to speak out.

Wivine, 15, Kabare

”

“

At school, I became a class representative. The SWVC gave me confidence. I organise meetings to raise awareness among boys.

Sifa, 17, Kalehe

”

“

Before, I thought staying silent would protect me. Thanks to the SWVC, I found the courage to speak out, and now I dream of becoming a lawyer.

Clarisse, 16, Kalehe

”

“

My mother joined the RWLC. She now sells her products at the market and depends on no one. I want to follow her example.

Déborah, 14, Kabare

”





Julie, a determined young girl, raises her voice for the right to education and boldly rejects early and forced marriages. Her stance, taken during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, embodies the growing awareness and courage among girls to challenge harmful practices and claim their future with dignity and conviction.





Challenges Encountered

Despite notable progress and encouraging results, several major challenges have marked the project’s implementation and continue to threaten its sustainability.

Logistical constraints and remoteness

Several intervention villages are hard to reach due to poor road conditions and geographic isolation. This has complicated delivery of agricultural inputs, activity monitoring, and training organization. During the rainy season, some areas become completely cut off for days, requiring alternative approaches which we set up such as extended field stays, collaboration with locally trained mobile agronomists, beneficiary organization within Rural Women’s Leadership Centres (RWLCs), and seasonal planning to adapt to access challenges.

Increasing pressure on VSLA resources

The success and visible impact of the Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) have generated massive interest within the communities, with a growing demand for membership. While this enthusiasm is encouraging, it has quickly placed pressure on the available funds, limiting the capacity to grant microloans. Some women, although active and committed, have been unable to benefit from loans due to a lack of circulating capital. We are currently working to strengthen the structure of the VSLAs, both through increased financial support and by building their management capacity.



Need to expand the Schools Without Violence Clubs to other schools

Given the proven effectiveness of the Schools Without Violence Clubs (SWVC), many non-participating schools have expressed a desire to join the programme. This strong demand for expansion highlights the relevance of the approach but also raises questions about the project's current capacity to meet this growing need. There remains a significant requirement for teacher training, educational materials, and technical support to ensure a qualitative and well-managed expansion of the SWVC.

Resistance to changes in social norms

Gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in many households. Although the project has created spaces for women to speak out and value their voices, their decision-making power within households remains limited. Some beneficiaries still face resistance from their partners or communities, especially when they begin to take economic initiatives or assert themselves publicly. It is necessary to strengthen approaches to transforming social norms by involving men, traditional and religious leaders more actively in awareness-raising activities.

Resurgence of armed conflicts and persistent insecurity

The deteriorating security situation in certain areas of South Kivu and eastern DRC has temporarily limited access to some villages and disrupted certain activities. Despite this, the project is continuing to support survivors, with a resilience mechanism based on local hospitals and local informal structures of rural women and first aiders active in the villages. Our team have adapted our interventions to the context, ensuring the continuity of essential services. This operational flexibility enables us to respond effectively to the priority needs of women and girl survivors of SGBV, while maintaining a constant link with the affected communities.





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A woman vegetable vendor takes advantage of the 2024 Agricultural Fair to showcase her produce, gaining visibility and new customers. This opportunity not only boosts her income but also highlights the impact of women's empowerment through access to markets and community recognition of their entrepreneurial role.



Sustainability and perspectives

The sustainability of the project now rests on three strategic pillars that ensure its continuity beyond the active implementation phase. These include, among others:

Community ownership

One of the project's most promising outcomes lies in the level of ownership shown by the beneficiaries themselves. From initial participants, many women have become key agents of change within their communities. Some now lead Village Savings and Credit Associations (VSCAs), others coordinate Rural Women Leadership Centres (RWLCs), or serve as local trainers for new participants. This shift from beneficiary to community facilitator is a strong indicator of sustainability. It reflects genuine empowerment, where women's leadership becomes a driving force for resilience and lasting social transformation.

Strengthening local capacities

The project has focused on transferring technical and social skills to local actors, who ensure its continuity. Mobile agronomists, teachers involved in the Schools Without Violence Clubs (SWVCs), and community women leaders now oversee the daily implementation of activities. This structure of trained and committed local representatives not only helps embed the project within the social fabric but also ensures adaptability to changing circumstances. The cascade training approach and the recognition of local knowledge are central to this sustainability dynamic.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

The project has consolidated an approach based on local synergies by mobilizing a diverse range of stakeholders: schools, traditional and administrative authorities, women's organizations, youth associations, technical partners, and community networks. This collaborative approach strengthens the project's legitimacy, broadens its reach, and creates a favorable ecosystem for the continuation and expansion of activities. MKAAJI MPYA thus plays a catalytic role, facilitating coordination and intersectoral dialogue in support of social change.



Medium-term perspectives

To consolidate the project's achievements and ensure the long-term sustainability of its actions, MKAAJI MPYA is exploring several complementary strategic directions. These include the gradual expansion of the Schools Without Violence Clubs (SWVCs) to additional vulnerable schools, particularly around mining areas not yet covered, in response to strong demand from educational communities.

The Rural Women Leadership Centres (RWLCs) will also be strengthened to become recognized platforms by local authorities and other development partners serving as community-based structures capable of mobilizing resources, providing continuous training, and leading effective advocacy efforts. This approach will also be expanded to other provinces facing similar challenges, to promote the replication of best practices.

Moreover, ***particular emphasis will be placed on linking women's empowerment, fight against GBV with environmental protection through the promotion of sustainable, climate-resilient agricultural practices around mining sites. But also and integrating the sustainable use and valorization of natural resources into the empowerment of rural women and girls***

This includes agroecology, community-led reforestation, and sustainable land and natural resource management. Finally, integrating sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention modules into school curricula and community awareness efforts will help instill long-term behavioral change from an early age.



At the Rural Women's Leadership Centre in Kabare, women and girls receive training in entrepreneurship and savings through Village Savings and Loan Associations, helping them build economic resilience and mutual support.



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Cross-cutting transformational impacts: Towards lasting social change beyond expected outcomes

Several significant developments, although indirect or cross-cutting, reflect the project's transformational reach and deserve to be highlighted.

Shift in male attitudes

Men's participation in awareness-raising activities and community dialogues has shown notable progress. Initially, cultural resistance and patriarchal attitudes limited male engagement, but a gradual behavioural shift has begun to take shape. An increasing number of husbands are now actively supporting their wives involved in Rural Women's Leadership Centres (RWLCs) or Village Savings and Credit Associations (VSCAs), helping to foster a more balanced and respectful domestic environment. Some even take part in organising forums or promoting good practices within their communities.

Targeted support for single mothers

Ware of their extreme vulnerability and the stigma they face, the project has initiated specific actions targeting teenage mothers. These initiatives include psychosocial support sessions, tailored training programs, and assistance with reintegration into school or economic activities. These young girls, often marginalized, thus regain future prospects and a valued role within the community. They are given priority in all RWLC set up.

Documentation and capitalization of outcomes

With a view to sustainability and knowledge sharing, MKAAJI MPYA has initiated a structured process for documenting best practices. A series of technical sheets, case studies, and thematic testimonials is currently being produced to promote organizational learning and facilitate the replication of approaches in similar contexts. This capitalization represents a strategic lever for advocacy and territorial expansion.



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Cross-cutting transformational impacts: Towards lasting social change beyond expected outcomes

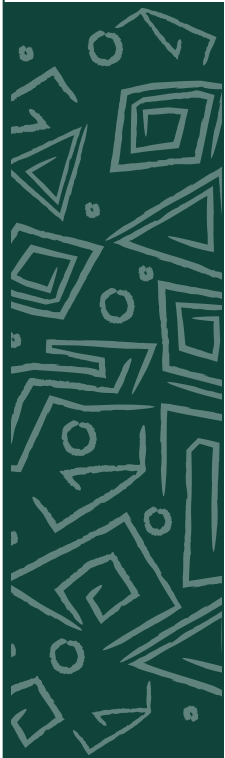
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Enhancing the visibility of beneficiary women

Some women beneficiaries of the project, previously marginalized, now have access to representation spaces at the territorial level. They speak out during community meetings, local development committees, and even intercommunal forums. This enhancement of their visibility and legitimacy helps break down gender barriers in decision-making spheres and ensures that the voices of rural women are heard on issues that directly affect them.

Growing interest in replicating the model

In light of the observed results, the demand for replicating the RWLCs (Rural Women Leadership Centres) and SWVCs (Schools Without Violence Clubs) models continues to grow. Community stakeholders, schools, and even territorial authorities from other mining areas or vulnerable provinces have expressed their willingness to adopt these integrated approaches. This momentum opens up new prospects for a well-managed scaling-up, driven by the expertise gained and the project’s social legitimacy.



Conclusion

From Lushebere to Chulwe, through Kabare and Kalehe, in South Kivu, this project has demonstrated that community transformation is not only possible it is already unfolding. In areas long marked by violence, displacement, and deep structural injustice, signs of renewal are emerging, led by those most impacted. MKAAJI MPYA has opened a path toward dignity and resilience, where women and girls are reclaiming their voices, their rights, and their futures. This progress has been made possible thanks to **the flexible and unrestricted support of The Circle NGO**. With this type of financing, The Circle's approach enabled adaptation, innovation, and deep alignment with community needs. It allowed the project not just to implement activities, but to nurture leadership, test solutions, and strengthen local ownership even in fragile and shifting environments.

These advances are not anecdotal. They are the outcome of bold, community-driven strategies rooted in trust, feminist values, and long-term vision. Women are now leading groups, managing businesses, mentoring peers. Girls once afraid to speak now lead awareness campaigns and dream of becoming rights defenders around mining sites in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

To outsiders, these villages may seem distant and forgotten. But from Lushebere to Chulwe, a new narrative is emerging not of fear and silence, but of leadership, solidarity, and hope rising from the heart of transformation.



She Rises is more than a mid-term impact report. It's a collective movement born from the courage of rural women and girls determined to reclaim their dignity in the face of sexual and gender-based violence. Anchored in the heart of South Kivu's mining zones, this initiative sheds light on the complex interplay between conflict, exploitation, and resilience. Drawing from the lived experiences of communities in Lushebere, Chulwe, Kambululu, Nyamukubi and Nindja in Kabare and Kalehe territories in the Province of South Kivu, Eastern DRC, this report presents a comprehensive overview of actions taken to empower women and girls through leadership centres, school clubs, local savings groups, and agro-entrepreneurial support. With contributions from survivors, educators, agronomists, and community leaders, this document reflects a deeply participatory journey toward safety, equality, and long-term transformation. It serves as both a record of progress and a call to sustain feminist action in regions still grappling with the aftermath of violence and systemic injustice. Backed by the continuous support of The Circle NGO, this report underscores the possibility of building communities where girls learn without fear, women lead with confidence, and collective resilience redefines what is possible.

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