

Democratic Republic of Congo

Redefining gender roles for women, building opportunities



Unifor
**Social
Justice
Fund**

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The Democratic Republic of Congo has been said to be one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman. Years of civil war and extreme violence have meant that families are displaced, separated or members of the family are killed.

Sexual gender-based violence has been used as a tactic of war and the continuing presence of armed militias can make women and girls' mobility and maintaining personal safety extraordinarily difficult.



In eastern Congo, years of conflict has led to women replacing men as the primary economic providers for the family, as men are absent due to displacement, death or may be unable to work or find employment.

The change has created the opportunity to renegotiate traditional gender roles, and an opening for women to participate in the formal economy through waged employment.

Unifor Social Justice Fund has partnered with War Child Canada to empower women so they can participate fully in their communities and provide for themselves and their children.



The goals of the project were to ensure that women have improved access to education and training; are supported by women worker-run associations as well as increasing support and respect for the rights of women – particularly their economic rights and role in the workforce.



Women in the Congolese province of South Kivu have traditionally been employed in the informal economy, due to a lack of education, in combination with child rearing and family farming responsibilities. A lack of education for women and girls stands as a major barrier preventing women from moving into formal, waged employment. Nearly half of all women in DRC's eastern province of Kivu are illiterate. Only 28 per cent of girls are enrolled in secondary school, compared with 51 per cent of boys. Girls face the additional barriers to education of early marriage, domestic chores, child labour, poverty and the prioritizing of boys' education over girls.



"We learned a lot of things and now are convinced that the world cannot develop without women."

Literacy Level 3 participant in Baraka

The project used literacy as a starting point, engaging with community leaders about who would most benefit from the program, as well as for the hiring of local trainers to carry out the educational sessions, rooting it firmly in the community to gain local support.

The project focused on the most vulnerable women in the community: widowed, impoverished or caring for many children with no means of providing for them. The project also addressed local community leaders, as well as men and boys, with the goal of increasing awareness of women's rights and to ensure they understand the importance of supporting women's economic advancement.

Working with local community partners, War Child set up eight literacy centres in eight different neighbouring communities, serving 154 women and two men.

Women were also referred to and supported by local women-run worker associations, providing a secure environment to learn from other women entrepreneurs, with the intention of later accessing micro-financing or a village loan. War Child works to strengthen local organizations already operating in the project area so that gains are sustainable.

Shifting attitudes in the community about women's rights, particularly women's economic rights is vital to the success of any project intended to help empower women. War Child first held sensitization training for three local partners, who later assisted in the delivery of more than 20 community sessions in the eight towns where literacy training took place.

The sessions attracted 5,300 people, a mixture of men, women, boys and girls who learned about human rights, women's rights - in particular the right to education, security and participate in the workforce, as well as the benefit to the family when women are involved as breadwinners. Dialogues were also held with nearly 600 community leaders with a similar focus, in hopes of gaining their support for women's economic rights.

The **Social Justice Fund** supports development with a focus on equity, believing that social justice, equality and human rights must be a core part of any development, with a particular emphasis on improving the lives of women.

KUSOMBA na kuandika

Neno "uchuuzi"

le04-10-2014

ongezi kuhusu uchuuzi

nini kufanya uchuuzi?

wana fanya uchuuzi kwa kutafuta

uchuuzi ni gani?

kiyo mazuri.

Watu wana kila kitu?

* Ndiyo
— kila uchuuzi inaleta faida? * hapana

— Vitu gani hatu wezi kuvichuuzi?

* mavi
— wakati gani wachuuzi wana ingia kati
ruhombo? * wakati wana uza vyashara

ku kubeyi ya mingi, au vyashara kuwa vingi
ruhombo. ndiyo wana pata

— wakati gani wachuuzi wana pata faida?
* wakati wana uza vyashara vile vihatu

— wakati gani wachuuzi wana pata faida?
* wakati wana uza vyashara vile vihatu

"We were illiterate before, but now we have started to read and write. We know that we have the same rights as men."

Literacy Level 1 participant in Baraka