

# Women for Women International - DRC

## Challenges Women face



**149 of 208**  
DRC's rank on the UN Gender Equality Index<sup>1</sup>

**65.9%**  
Can read<sup>2</sup>



**60%**  
Complete primary school<sup>3</sup>

**33%**  
Marry by the age of 18<sup>4</sup>



**4.9**  
Average number of children<sup>5</sup>

**74.8%**

Believe that a husband beating his wife is a justifiable action<sup>6</sup>



**57%**  
Experience physical, psychological or sexual violence<sup>7</sup>

**20.4%**  
Practice some form of contraception<sup>8</sup>



**693/** Maternal deaths  
**100,000** Live births<sup>9</sup>



Photo credit: Allison Wright

## Country profile

In the eastern part of Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has grappled with wars, civil strife, and multiple rebellions since 1996, women and girls suffer disproportionately from high rates of violence and extreme poverty. State and rebel armed groups have used rape and sexual assault widely – especially in the eastern provinces – to terrorize and humiliate individuals, their families, and their communities. Violence is pervasive, including many forms of violence against women and girls. At the same time, services such as health care, psychosocial support, security and justice for survivors of violence are limited.

DRC is the largest country in Africa, but conflict in the east, political instability and ineffective governance have complicated development efforts, and it remains one of the poorest countries in the world with the lowest levels of human development. Maternal mortality is alarmingly high, and 13 mothers die in childbirth out of every 1,000 live births. Access to clean water and sanitation is sparse, especially in rural areas, and diarrheal diseases kill over a half million children each year. Women for Women International is committed to supporting the most marginalized women in eastern DRC to rebuild their lives and communities.

### Our reach



### Where we work



# Women for Women International - DRC

## Our program in DRC

### Participant Profile:



### Vocational skills & Training:



Agriculture/Agribusiness



Basket-making



Beauty Care



Bread-making



Small Business Management



Soap-making



Cooking/Restaurant Management



Poultry

## Our work

In conflict-affected areas with limited access to services and discriminatory laws and gender norms, women face pervasive insecurity, lack of adequate livelihoods, educational inequalities, threats of sexual violence, and poor health and well-being. Women for Women International seeks to create opportunities for change in the lives of these marginalized women.

Women for Women International has developed a program that offers women in eastern DRC a constructive, dignified way to regain control of their lives. Our foundational training helps women know and defend their rights, influence decisions at home and in their communities, initiate activities that generate income, and save money for the future, contributing to economic self-sufficiency in their lives and for their families.

## Our program

When supported by her peers and provided with the right resources and opportunities, even the most marginalized woman can develop the confidence and skills to transform her life, her family and her community.

Women for Women International's 12-month training program provides economically and socially marginalized women living in countries affected by war and conflict with the skills and resources to transform their lives.

Women meet bi-weekly in groups of 25 to learn, share and support one another. Women for Women International creates a safe and comfortable space for women to learn about essential health practices and nutrition, fundamental human and legal rights, household decision making, and participation in civic affairs and advocacy.

To support women to earn and save money, Women for Women International also offers training sessions in numeracy, business management basics, planning, selling products in the market, bookkeeping, group business and cooperative management. Women receive 40-70 hours of hands-on professional and vocational training in market-oriented livelihoods.

Each program participant also receives a training stipend of \$10 per month. The majority of participants either save this money or use it to cover training-related expenses, contribute to household needs, pay school fees for their children or invest in a small business. For women customarily excluded from economic activities, this may be the first time they have control over their own money.

WfWI has introduced Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to women in the program. As another vehicle for financial inclusion, these savings and lending groups enable women to save more and access credit to grow their businesses.

### Local partners:

- Innovation et Formation pour le Développement et la Paix (IFDP)
- Levain des Femmes du Sud-Kivu (LDF)

- Solidarité des Femmes Actives Pour la Défense des Droits Humains (SOFAD)

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Photo credit: Allison Wright

## Building allies: men's engagement program

A transformative shift towards gender equality is only possible if we engage men as allies. Since 2002, Women for Women International has been a pioneer in men's engagement activities aimed at targeting male community leaders and male family members of our women participants in Afghanistan, DRC, Nigeria, South Sudan, Rwanda and Kosovo.

In DRC, male community leaders, with their strong influence on community social norms and practices, are currently being trained on women's rights, focused on violence, inheritance, decision-making, health and well-being. These leaders, in turn, train male community members and male partners of Women for Women International's women participants. Family and community dialogues provide additional forums for discussion on women's rights and participation. Women for Women International aims to illustrate how better understanding of and respect for women's rights improves the overall prosperity of families and communities. In DRC, Women for Women International has reached 7,200 men to date.

## Partnerships for Economic Opportunities and Advocacy

WfWI has developed partnerships with local NGOs, community leaders, and market and government actors to provide women with new opportunities to participate in livelihood development and local advocacy issues. Since 2008, Bloomberg Philanthropies has supported marginalized women in DRC to gain business and life skills through public-private partnerships. WfWI also partners with local advocacy NGOs to promote women's rights and prevent gender-based violence.

## Increasing Men's awareness changes behavior

“ Before I lived like my wife's chief in the house. My wife could not say anything, even sit next to me or another man. But since the teachings, my wife is taking part in decision-making in the household, and she is healthy and fulfilled ”

- Member of the Men's Discussion Group of Kalehe

“ Never could a man help his wife in housework. Never could a man accompany his wife to the field. Now, we see how men begin to give their wives a hand in household chores and accompany them to work in the fields. In many families, men have understood that their daughters or their wives also have rights to the portion of land. ”

- Wife of a Men's Engagement Group participant

“ His participation in the men's training organized by WfWI was for me a rescue as for a drowning person. Now that my husband is taking part in the discussions he has begun to change: He no longer beats me, he no longer wastes the money of the family. Today, he considers me a useful person who can bring a plus in all that we undertake for the well-being of our family. ”

- Wife of a Men's Engagement Group participant

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Photo credit: Allison Wright



WOMEN *for* WOMEN  
International

## Our vision

We envision a world in which all women determine the course of their lives and reach their full potential.

## Our mission

In countries affected by conflict and war, Women for Women International supports the most marginalized women to earn and save money, improve health and well-being, influence decisions in their homes and communities, and connect to networks for support. By utilizing skills, knowledge, and resources, women are able to create sustainable change for themselves, their families, and their communities.

## Contact us

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