

COLORS OF CONNECTION

TOGETHER WOMEN RISE – FINAL REPORT



- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Organization name | Colors of Connection |
| Grant amount | \$47,250 |
| Contact | Christina Mallie, Executive Director & Co-Founder |
| Address | PO Box 50371, Brooklyn, NY 11205 |

2. **Outcomes the project was designed to achieve**

Girl Awakening is a year-round sustainable project supporting girls and young women at the margins in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo with protection from violence and opportunities for their growth and development through life skills, creative activities and public artmaking.

Goal: To empower girls in Goma, DRC to effect positive change for themselves and their community in the pursuit of equality and freedom from violence.

Outcome 1: 80 adolescent girls aged 10-12 will demonstrate increased autonomy, well-being, and an increased ability to protect themselves from GBV.

Outcome 2: Community leaders and community members from the neighborhood of Bujovu and other neighborhoods in Goma will have increased participation and leadership in ensuring the safety and well-being of young women and adolescent girls. 40 community stakeholders (local government and other positions of leadership in the community such as in churches), and 160 community members will be reached through forums, and 30,000 community members through public art.

Outcome 3: Our local partner will have enhanced capacity to effectively reach the most marginalized adolescent girls and provide art-based life skills and GBV prevention programming.

3. What was accomplished in connection with this project. Please address each stated objective.

Outcome 1: 80 adolescent girls aged 10-12 will demonstrate increased autonomy, well-being, and an increased ability to protect themselves from GBV.

305 girls have received an average of 20 art and life skills sessions. They acquired essential 'assets' - skillsets, knowledge, and resources that protect them and enable them to thrive including: Knowing how to safely and hygienically manage menstruation, knowing how to manage their sexual and reproductive health and contraception methods, knowing where to access safety and health services including gender-based violence support, having trusted peers and older female mentors, and knowing how to self-soothe/regulate emotions.

62 girl participants received scholarships so that they could attend school for the 2022-2023 school year including - Tuition fees: registration, exam fees, and (2) School supplies: including uniforms, backpacks, notebooks.

60 girls who first joined the program in 2021 and 2022 graduated into the role of junior mentors, joining their mentors to deliver program sessions to our latest cohort. This enables them to consolidate their learnings and develop leadership skills. It is a significant step in our cascading leadership model to grow locally-led female leadership, reinforcing sustainability and positioning the program to scale.

Quotes from participants, parents and staff about impact:

"It's only since I've been part of this program that I've felt so listened to and considered".

- Participant

"I had no idea that one day I'd be able to become a junior mentor and teach the other participants. Today I'm no longer ashamed to stand up in front of people to talk and share, something I didn't think I was capable of doing."

- Junior mentor Age
11.

"These teachings have opened our minds, I was ashamed to tell my daughters certain things clearly (the parts of the genitals, and how pregnancy happens...). Thanks to this program I have learned to be frank with my family. It is how I can prevent harm to my children that can happen from lack of information."

- Mother of a
participant

Girls are now coming forward and disclosing abuse and rape to their mentors. This shows that trust is being built and helps us protect girls.

- Staff member



Clockwise from top left: (1) group mandala exercise creating art from found materials, (2) mentors teaching girls about sexual and reproductive health, (3) girls at school, (4) girls coloring in a resource and risk map of their community. Photo credit: Pamela Tulizo 2022.



Junior mentor Aimee delivering a program session to girl participants, May 2023. Aimee started the program in 2021.
Photo credit: Pamela Tulizo

Outcome 2: Community leaders and community members from the neighborhood of Bujovu and other neighborhoods in Goma will have increased participation and leadership in ensuring the safety and well-being of young women and adolescent girls. 35 community stakeholders (local government and other positions of leadership in the community such as in churches), and 72 community members will be reached through forums, and 30,000 community members through public art.

Community leadership and members (35) have engaged on issues of girls' rights and girls' access to resources and services in the community through meetings to discuss girls' needs, and public forums in which girls presented on their rights. A community agreement was signed by the neighborhood chef committing to work with us to protect girls' rights and increase girls' access to resources and services. Three murals reaching approximately 30,000 residents were created that express 14 core human rights regularly violated in girls' daily lives. The girls created their own Bill of Rights, that reflects rights enshrined in several international and regional legal instruments ratified by the DRC. More about it on our blog: <https://www.colorsofconnection.org/blog/14-human-rights-identified-by-girl-awakening> Girls presented at 4 public forums to 72 community members (37 women, and 35 men).

Quotes from community members and community leadership about impact

One mural was painted in a health center declaring patient's rights to treatment because participants were being extorted by health personnel for emergency and essential services including post rape kits and contraception.

"Since the creation of this mural, I have personally found that there has been an increase in attendance at the family planning service, this mural is a great tool for raising awareness and is very useful for

the population of this neighborhood.”

- Nurse at Bujovu Health Center

"There are several types of harmful traditional practices here in Bujovu, including FGM, early pregnancy and forced marriage. This mural and the rights that the girls have proclaimed, inspires us to make an effort through awareness-raising to reduce or even eradicate these practices in order to protect girls and women against all forms of violence."

- Community member,
Community forum on public murals

"I have been very happy and satisfied with this program from the beginning, the program has included leaders in all activities, leaders are informed at every level of the program and they accompany the program."

- Chef of neighborhood, Bujovu,



Two of three completed murals created by participants on girls' rights in Bujovu, Goma, DRC 2023. Photo credit: Pamela Tulizo

Outcome 3: Our local partner will have enhanced capacity to effectively reach the most marginalized adolescent girls and provide art-based life skills and GBV prevention programming.

We made significant strides in supporting our local partner Tulizo Elle Space (TES) in program delivery, as well as supporting their development and operations as a young organization. We provided knowledge sharing and capacity building to TES delivered through intensive trainings, as well as the daily mentorship while running the program. In addition to our trainings, we supported two TES staff to attend a 5-day intensive train the trainer's program at the Street Business School in Uganda. With this training, the two staff members will train mentors in Girl Awakening to effectively manage their finances and launch their own entrepreneurial projects. In summary, TES gained capabilities in: fundraising, program management, financial management, small business entrepreneurship, and girl-centered programming.

"Working with Colors of Connection as a local partner, has been and remains for a great experience, very interesting in the cultural sector. We have realized an extraordinary project in my community with the

girls and the mentors. We have learned a lot from the staff of Colors of Connection especially in capacity building with our team and for me personally on the side of fundraising research and networking.”

*- Pamela Tulizo,
Coordinator, TES*



TES staff members Nathalie (l) and Gracy (r) celebrate with Street Art Business School facilitator at completion of train the trainers workshop, Kampala, Uganda, May 2023.

4. Have the number of beneficiaries changed?

We more than tripled our original target of reaching 80 girls, instead reaching 305 girls without needing to change the staff and mentor structure. This was possible because the staff and mentors had sufficient experience to be able to work with more participants (they had already worked with groups of girls over a 3-month period).

In addition, 60 girls who first joined the program in 2021 and 2022 graduated into the role of junior mentors, joining their mentors to deliver program sessions to our latest cohort (noted in outcome 1). This enables them to consolidate their learnings and develop leadership skills. It is a significant step in our cascading leadership model to grow locally led female leadership, reinforcing sustainability and positioning the program to scale.

We grew our beneficiaries to include 157 parents (145 female and 13 male) of girls. They engaged in 7 life skills sessions to learn about adolescent development and girls' rights. We added this component because we learned that working with parents is an important and complementary piece to the sessions with girls. It helps parents better understand and support the program objectives.

The following beneficiaries were below target: we reached 72 instead of the original 160 community members targeted for community forums. This was because we reduced the number of community forums from 8 to 4 as it during a period of higher insecurity in Goma. We also reached 35 instead of 40 community stakeholders through meetings. This was due to some absences.

Other beneficiary numbers remained that same: 8 Young women mentors, and 15,000 girls and women in the community engaging with the public art.

5. What challenges did you face in connection with this project? How did you address these challenges?

Civil unrest and security concerns: Since July 2022 there have been several violent anti-UN protests in Goma that disrupted our activities as it is dangerous to operate when protests are happening. However, it hasn't significantly changed our implementation as we've only needed to delay activities by a few days. To address these challenges we have put into place a system for staff communication on security issues and are working to develop a more robust staff safety policy.

Change in local NGO partner: We made a change in our local partner in March 2022. We were partnering with an organization called les Étoiles Messagères (EM) at the time of our application in 2021 and changed to another local women's organization Tulizo Elle Space (TES). This was mentioned to Veena and Jenny in March when we received news of the award. This change was made because we had concerns about EM's capacity to work together as a cohesive group and the motivation and availability of some members. We are very happy with the outcomes so far of working with our current partner TES and believe the partnership is stronger and more viable in the long term. We feel more confident that working with TES will help us more successfully achieve objective #3 - Our local partner will have enhanced capacity to effectively reach the most marginalized adolescent girls and provide art-based life skills and gender-based violence prevention programming.

Fundraising shortfalls for 2022: We raised \$77,250 for the project, \$53,000 less than our goal of \$130,000. Because this was a potential scenario we had planned for, we successfully adapted the program and made it work on a reduced scale. Our implementation over the 12-month grant period with adaptations noted: May – June 2022 program development; July – October weekly sessions; November- December activities paused to adapt to budget; January – current running sessions every other week instead of once a week with participants to adapt to budget. We implemented through May 2023.

Poor performance from monitoring and evaluation consultant: We hired a local consultant in Goma DRC to collect and analyze data working with a monitoring and evaluation toolkit designed by our research liaison Dr. Nadia Fazal. While the data was successfully collected it became clear in the consultant's mid project report that she was unable to conduct qualitative analysis though her experience and background had indicated she would be qualified. We unfortunately were unable to find another local consultant (within our budget) to complete the work. We now know that it will be difficult to find local qualified consultant to do the qualitative level of analysis we need and therefore will need to budget in monitoring and evaluation costs for an international consultant in the future.

6. Is your organization or project situation different than presented in the approved proposal?

Change in local NGO partner – see above response to #5.

7. What are the most important lessons learned?

There are great benefits of working in a concentrated area for normative change and building a dense female social network: We have been working within a .5 kilometer area of Goma, reaching approximately 95% of girls aged 10 and 32% of girls aged 10-12 out of school. This is the first project in which we have utilized this strategy. Seeing the positive results observed is one of the most important lessons learned and gives us confidence that this is the right approach moving forward. Some of the positive results observed by staff and mentors: 1) girls and mentors can easily arrange to meet each other, thus reducing barriers to support – both for every day needs and emergencies. For example, one girl participant was raped at night and was able to walk to her mentor for help first thing in the early morning. 2) Girls and mentors easily run into each other while going about daily life naturally strengthening the social network. 3) Given the saturation levels, most other younger and older females in the select geographic area have a high likelihood of being a sibling of a participant and/or having friends who are in the program, increasing the likelihood that they will also learn about information, practices, and resources shared in the program – amplifying impact (approximately 453 other girls reached).

Safe spaces like the ones offered to our participants, mentors and junior mentors are critical because girls and women in Goma experience an almost constant onslaught of discrimination and abuse and have virtually no place in which to be listened to, understood, and to gather strength and protection. We learned about the invaluable place the program provides for participants from the semi-structured interviews, and feedback from our mentors during workshops. For example one mentor shared that even at home she does not feel supported or safe. This is rooted in the fact that community, families and individuals in Goma do not recognize many forms of gender-based violence that women and girls are experiencing including marital rape, physical abuse, and deprivation of education.

Public art continues to be a persuasive medium to challenge the harmful gender norms deeply ingrained in Congolese society. Through the community forums on the murals created, community members shared that they found it to be effective for widespread sensitization. In addition, witnessing girls collaboratively working as a cohesive team, with the use of ladders, left a lasting impression on the majority of passersby, surprising and inspiring them.

"There are several types of harmful traditional practices here in Bujovu, including FGM, early pregnancy and forced marriage. This mural and the rights that the girls have proclaimed, inspires us to make an effort through awareness-raising to reduce or even eradicate these practices in order to protect girls and women against all forms of violence."

- Community member,
Community forum on public murals

8. What has changed within your organization as a result of the project?

As mentioned as well in response to #15 we developed a three-year project scale out plan and secured funders for an additional year and a half of funding: June 2022 – September 2024.

9. Describe the unexpected events and outcomes, including unexpected benefits

These are captured in responses #5 #7, and #8

10. Did you change your strategy as a result of obstacles you encountered? How will you address these challenges in the future?

No.

11. Approximately how many lives have been touched both directly and indirectly by the project?

	Category	#
Direct Impact	Girls	245
	Junior Mentors	60
	Mentors	8
	Leaders	35
	Community through forums	72
Indirect Impact	Guardians/Parents	157
	No households including mentors, junior mentors, and girls (20% girls from same household)	252
	Girls in same household (2.8 per household 1.8 in addition to girls reached)	453
	Household (5.8 without girls is 3.8)	957
	General community (via public art)	36,000
	Girls and women in community (via public art)	15,000

12. What are the measurements used to monitor success and how was this information measured (e.g., surveys, observation)? Be specific and include measurable results.

We employed an evaluation approach including a combination of qualitative and quantitative measurements that evaluated impacts and changes of the 3 identified outcomes pre, mid, and post project. Examples of measurement tools used: Participant attendance tracker, Mural passers-by individual surveys, staff observation notes, and participants’ semi-structured interviews. However, because we don’t have sufficient funding to hire a consultant to analyze the data (replacing previous consultant) we only have some preliminary findings from qualitative interviews, of which several are shared above in question #3.

13. If the project is ongoing, provide plans and expected results, including projected timeframe.

The project is ongoing it maintains the same 3 core objectives and number of beneficiaries through September 2024. We hope to expand the number of beneficiaries in October 2024.

14. Provide a detailed list of all expenses incurred during the grant cycle which have been paid for with the Together Women Rise grant.

The Together Women Rise grant was utilized for the following expenses categorized by budget lines from May 2022 – May 2023:

Personnel

5 staff members	\$10,843
1 Project director	\$14,400
8 Mentors stipends	\$5,670
1 Misc. personnel support	\$160
Total Personnel	\$31,073

Community engagement

Food supplement for participants	\$6,126
Food supplement for parents/guardians	\$580
Community leader meetings	\$398
Community forums	\$221
Misc. participant expenses	\$1,334
Total community engagement	\$8,659

Supplies

Total supplies including: all art supplies for sessions and paint supplies for murals **\$7,516**

Total Expenses: \$47,250

15. Did this grant and relationship with Together Women Rise assist your organization in obtaining other funding, partnerships with other organizations, or public recognition in some capacity?

Fundraising opportunities for 2023: Funding from Together Women Rise enabled us to continue to prototype and refine this program, and successfully run it from May 2021 – May 2022. During this time, we developed a three-year scale out plan and secured funders for an additional year and a half of funding: June 2022 – September 2024. Together Women Rise support has been instrumental in attracting other funders, enabling us to demonstrate program successes and make a strong case for support. In 2023 we have thus far been awarded funding from the Obama Foundation’s Girls Opportunity Alliance, and the Purposeful With and For Girls’ Fund (both new donors), and the Tides Foundation, Adventures of the Mind Foundation and the Girls’ Rights Project (reoccurring donors). The USAID Mission in DRC has expressed interest in our 3-year scale out plan which is currently under review.