

MAISON DORCAS IN DRC

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN BUKAVU

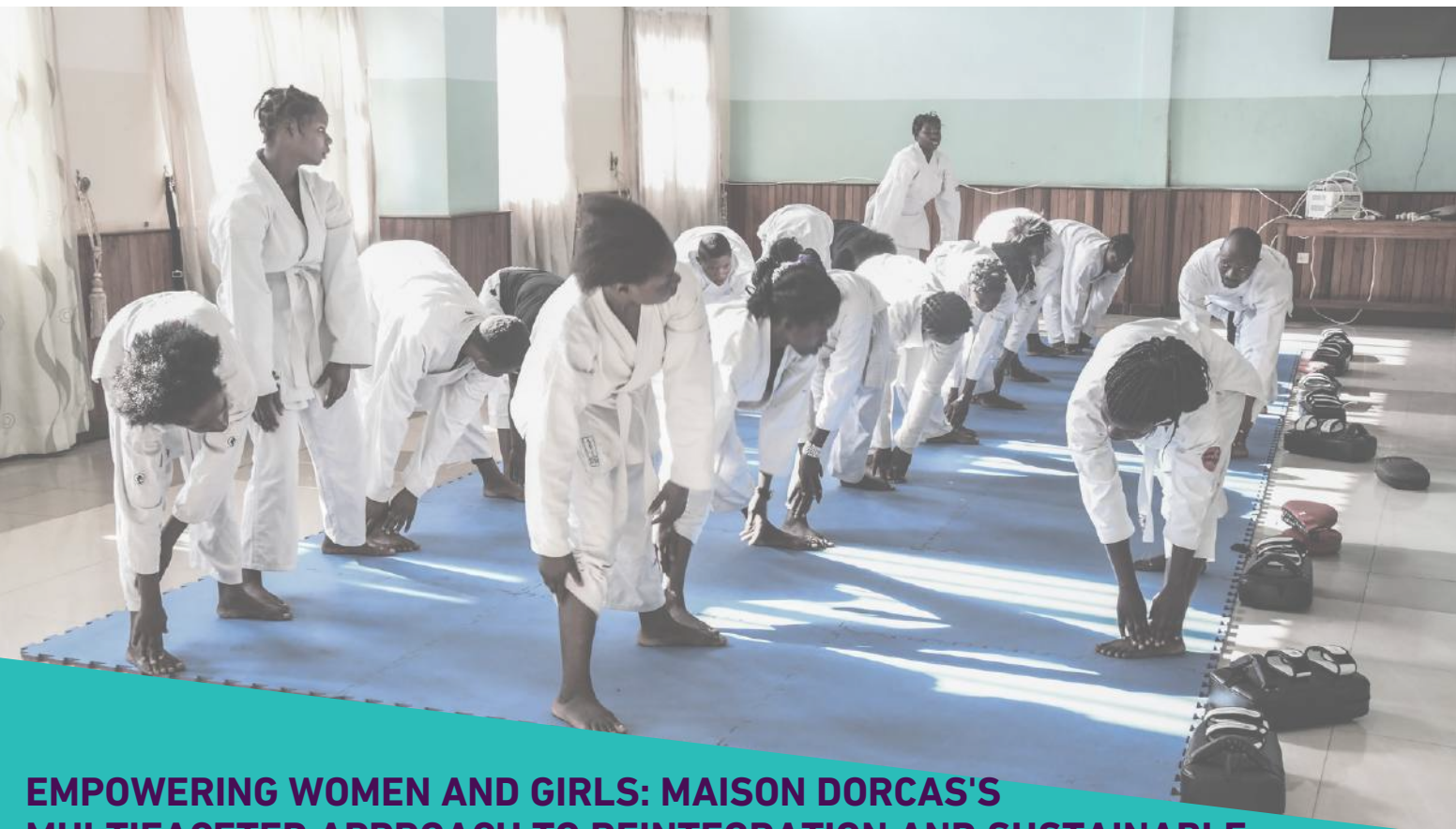
DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER



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Welcome to the Maison DORCAS newsletter! In this edition, we provide insights into the key achievements, successful activities, and inspiring stories of Maison DORCAS, a women's empowerment program under the umbrella of the Panzi Foundation.

In 2023, DORCAS HOUSE continued to benefit from financial support from NCA in the DRC. The structure has operated under the supervision of the board of directors of the Panzi Foundation. Maison DORCAS remained coordinated through five departments, each headed by a supervisor commonly known as head of department.



EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS: MAISON DORCAS'S MULTIFACETED APPROACH TO REINTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

Maison DORCAS operates through various departments, each serving a crucial role in empowering women and girls. The Transit Department acts as the main hub, welcoming and preparing beneficiaries for reintegration into their communities, alleviating tensions and stigma.

The Accommodation Service provides short-term housing for those unable to return home immediately after Panzi Hospital treatment.

The Learning Department conducts diverse training programs, including vocational skills and literacy. The Socio-Community Promotion Department supports and guides beneficiaries in becoming active community members, particularly through income-generating activities facilitated by the Entrepreneurship program. The Child Protection Department addresses the needs of abused women and girls, offering a secure "Child Friendly Space" and educational support. Lastly, the Technical Department ensures the center's long-term sustainability by managing security, plumbing, and electrical services.



Key activities and objectives in 2023

The activities of Maison DORCAS translate into five key results, each aligned with a specific department:

- Access to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Services - Transit Department
- Empowerment of Women and Adolescents - Learning Department
- Reduction of Maternal Mortality - Women and Child Protection Department
- Leadership of Survivors - Socio-Community Promotion Department
- Security and Maintenance of the Center - Technical Department



The main beneficiaries of Maison DORCAS are women and girls who are survivors of sexual violence, often referred by the medical pillar of the Panzi Foundation. The transit department welcomes these women, providing temporary housing, medical care, and psychosocial support.

Major Achievements in 2023

125 individuals, including dependent children, were accommodated in the transit center and benefited from three meals a day, proper housing, medical care, and psychosocial support

306 women completed vocational training, including literacy, and received government-issued certificates.

247 children, aged 0 to 11, were supervised at the playground.

65 youth received educational support, covering school fees, uniforms, and regular follow-ups.

711 individuals, including 604 women and 107 men, were involved in 26 mutual aid groups in Bukavu

8 business centers were supported in business planning and operation.

Collaboration with various partners for the establishment of value chains in different sectors.





Services offered at Maison Dorcas

Transit Department: Reception and Resettlement Preparation

- The transit department, the true heart of Maison DORCAS, provides temporary accommodation, psychosocial services, and support towards reintegration. Services include lodging, psychosocial support, and ongoing medical follow-up.

Socio-Community Promotion Department: Towards Community Autonomy

- This department supports beneficiaries in creating solidarity mutuels and business centers. In 2023, 711 individuals were supported in 26 mutuels in Bukavu, promoting financial autonomy and community development.
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Learning Department: Training and Empowerment

- The learning department offers a range of training, from tailoring and sewing to pastry, allowing women and girls to develop professional skills. In 2023, 306 women completed their training and received a certificate, preparing them for financial independence.

Child Protection Department: Support for Children and Education

- Managed by this department, the Child Friendly Space provides a secure environment and activities for the children of beneficiaries. The enrollment of 64 children in 2023 underscores the commitment to education.

Technical Department: Center Maintenance and Security

The technical department ensures the continuous operation of the center, including security, plumbing, and electricity services. Significant renovations have been undertaken to ensure a safe and sustainable environment.

SOME SUCCESS STORIES FROM 2023

From Survivor to Entrepreneur: Maman Mwamini's Journey of Empowerment

My name is Maman Mwamini, and I am a woman who has overcome the challenges of gender-based violence (GBV). My journey to success began when I was sensitized by a remarkable woman who found me in a difficult situation. Thanks to her, I was guided to Maison Dorcas, a place that would change my life.

Upon arrival at Maison Dorcas, I embarked on an exciting training program in soap making. In June 2023, I successfully obtained my certificate, a milestone that marked the beginning of my new life. Instead of sitting idle, I decided to put my newly acquired skills to use.

With determination, I invested in purchasing 1 kg of caustic soda and other necessary ingredients, and I started my own soap production. I diversified my product range by making toilet soaps and herbal soaps, putting into practice everything I had learned.

Today, I am proud to say that I am an independent woman who takes charge of her life and her family. I don't hesitate to share my positive experience with other women who have faced similar situations, encouraging them to join Maison Dorcas to start their own journey towards socio-economic reintegration.

My future is full of promise as I am saving up to develop a poultry farming venture. This project represents a new step towards financial stability and autonomy for me. I aspire to inspire more women to follow in my footsteps, proving that resilience and determination can transform lives.





From Struggle to Seamstress: Christelle's Journey of Empowerment

My name is Christelle Munyerenkana, and I am a mother of two children. My journey to success began when I found refuge at Maison Dorcas. Upon my arrival, I embarked on a learning journey in the field of cutting and sewing. Months of effort and determination paid off, and I was rewarded with funds for social reintegration.

Armed with this opportunity, I took the initiative to ask my husband to accompany me to buy a sewing machine. It was the beginning of my flourishing career as a seamstress. Today, I am recognized as the best seamstress in my neighborhood, specializing in creating sophisticated and unique designs.

My dream did not stop there. I am determined to take my craft to the next level by establishing my own sewing workshop. To achieve this goal, I have actively engaged in a MUSO (Mutual Solidarity). Within this mutual, we pool our savings and benefit from credits that help us develop our respective projects.

I want to share my experience with other women who have gone through similar situations. Maison Dorcas has been the catalyst for my transformation, offering exceptional services for free. I encourage all women in need to join this caring community to regain confidence, skills, and the means to build a better future.

Major success

Training and Leadership

Maison DORCAS has successfully trained 16 members of the Kaziba MUSO in business skills, positioning them as consultants for training in the region, thus reinforcing female leadership.

Empowerment through Education

A beneficiary from Nyabibwe, trained in cutting and sewing, has become a trainer, illustrating the transition from education to empowerment..

Networking and Structuring:

After follow-up by Maison DORCAS, the Bukavu MUSO formed three autonomous networks, developed business plans, and are considering structuring into cooperatives, promoting economic autonomy.



Successful Reintegration:

Beneficiaries reintegrated into soap making, baking, and leathercraft have successfully launched their activities, demonstrating the viability of Maison DORCAS' training and initiatives..

Value Chain and Partnerships:

Maison DORCAS is engaged in creating a value chain with partners such as Congo Closing Initiative and Eastern Congo Initiative, fostering development in various sectors.

Main challenges

Reduction of funds by the majority of donors to the Maison DORCAS program

The decrease in funding compromises the ability of Maison DORCAS to maintain and expand its programs and services. This directly impacts the scope and effectiveness of actions taken in favor of beneficiaries..

Vulnerability of beneficiaries for participation in activities

A beneficiary from Nyabibwe, trained in cutting and sewing, has become a trainer, illustrating the transition from education to empowerment..

Emotional and economic impact related to the situation in North Kivu

MUSO and Nobella Center members experience emotional imbalance caused by the M23 war situation. Economic challenges, such as rising food prices and exchange rates, negatively affect their activities, delaying repayments, and impeding business development.



Operational and logistical challenges:

Facilitators and sentinel encounter operational issues, including a lack of electricity, impacting the production of independent reports and the security of information. Additionally, the sentinel faces a lack of working tools, compounded by challenging weather conditions, hampering overall effectiveness

Need for funds for workshop rental and management tools

Financial needs for workshop rental (Nobella centers) and the acquisition of management tools and working capital remain unmet, hindering the development and sustainability of Maison DORCAS activities.

