



HERO WOMEN RISING

HERO WOMEN RISING

20 IMPACT 25 REPORT

Investing in Women.
Strengthening Communities.
Restoring Hope.

MAMA SHUJAA

OUR COMBINED RESILIENCE
IS THE BRIDGE BETWEEN
TODAY'S CHALLENGES AND
THE TOMORROW WE ARE
BUILDING TOGETHER.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

Dollars Raised

\$522K

We raised more than \$522K in gross revenue.



Funds Disbursed

\$345K

66% of gross revenue invested directly into programs



Population Reached

10K+

People reached through programs in eastern DRC



In 2025, locally led programs supported by Hero Women Rising reached thousands of families across eastern Democratic Republic of Congo - strengthening food security, expanding education, restoring forests, and empowering women leaders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6

LEADERSHIP
PERSPECTIVE

8

FINANCIAL
SNAPSHOT

10

BEYOND THE
HEADLINES

13

COMMUNICATIONS
& DEVELOPMENT
PERSPECTIVE

15

PROGRAM
HIGHLIGHTS

18

VOLUNTEER
SPOTLIGHT

19

DONOR
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Mission

To amplify the voices of women and girls in eastern Congo through education, technology, and opportunity - so they can rise, lead, and transform their communities.

“The strength of this mission is rooted in the people who stand behind it.”



Pete Giovale, Board Chair

LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE

Dear Friends,

If the past few years have been about building momentum, this year has been about learning how to carry it - responsibly, thoughtfully, and in a way that honors the communities at the center of this work.

In 2025, Hero Women Rising reached more than 10,000 people through locally led programs in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, while generating over \$522,000 in revenue to support and expand that work.

These are meaningful markers of progress. But what matters most is how that progress is held. Because the reality on the ground remains complex.

Communities continue to navigate displacement, economic instability, and ongoing conflict. And yet, what we see - again and again - is not defined by hardship alone. It is defined by leadership. Women organizing. Girls pursuing education. Families rebuilding. Local solutions taking root and growing stronger.

This is where our work begins.

Hero Women Rising exists to support and invest in that leadership - not to direct it. Our partnership with Mama Shujaa in DRC continues to be the clearest expression of this approach: locally rooted, deeply trusted, and unwavering in the face of challenge. This year has also asked something more of us as an organization.

As momentum grows, so does responsibility. We are called not only to expand, but to strengthen - to build the systems, relationships, and discipline required to sustain this work over time.

That includes how we steward resources, how we support our growing list of partners, and how we stay aligned with the values that brought us here.

In this way, our work closely complements what you will read in the pages ahead: a focus on sustaining momentum with intention, strengthening infrastructure, and preparing for the next phase of growth.

But underneath all of that is something simpler and more important. Trust.

- Trust in local leadership.
- Trust in long-term partnership.
- And trust in a shared belief that when women and girls are resourced and empowered, entire communities rise with them.

Thank you for walking alongside us.

With gratitude and solidarity,



Board Chair



Neema Namadamu, Founder



Valerie Bagley, Secretary



Stany Nzabarinda, Board Member

**“Together, we are not only responding to need,
we are investing in lasting opportunity.”**

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

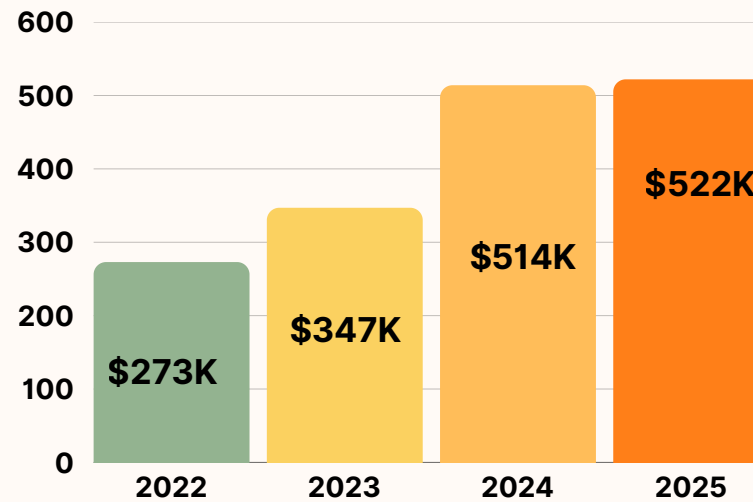
STEWARDSHIP & TRANSPARENCY

In 2025, Hero Women Rising generated \$522,752 in revenue, reflecting sustained growth and continued trust in our mission. Of the \$549,524 in total expenses, approximately 63% (\$345,755) was directed toward program investments in eastern DRC - funding grassroots initiatives that empower women, support children, and strengthen community stability.

Administrative expenses (37%) ensured strong governance, financial oversight, and the operational infrastructure necessary to steward resources responsibly and sustain long-term impact. Fundraising expenses remained under 1%, demonstrating a lean approach grounded in relationship-based giving.

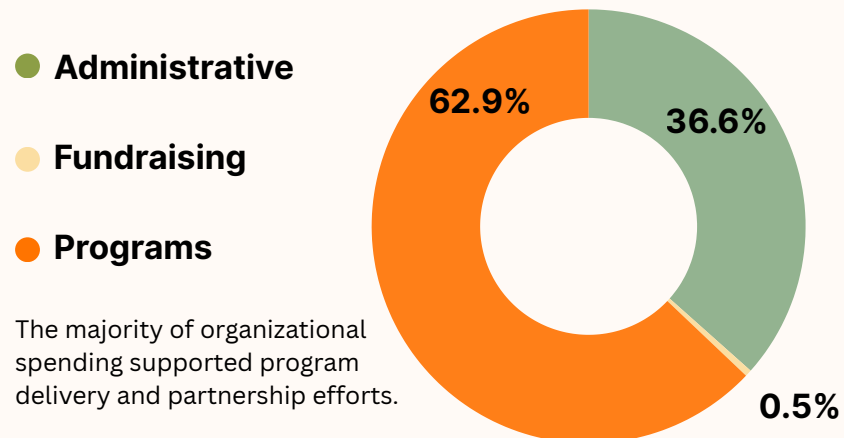
Revenue has nearly doubled since 2022, enabling deeper and more strategic investment in locally led solutions. We remain committed to transparency, accountability, and stewarding every dollar in a way that advances meaningful, measurable impact.

REVENUE GROWTH IN THOUSANDS



Revenue has grown steadily each year since 2022.

2025 EXPENSE BREAKDOWN



Members of a food security cooperative harvesting sorghum to combat malnutrition.



An internally displaced student at the CSMS in Mikenge during a class session.

Women training to design and construct improved cookstoves to increase firewood efficiency and reduce deforestation pressure on the Itombwe Reserve.



BEYOND THE HEADLINES

Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo is often described only through the lens of crisis. While the region continues to face real challenges including economic instability, displacement, and limited access to education and employment - that is not the full story. To understand the work of Hero Women Rising, we must see both the realities communities navigate and the strength that already exists within them.

Women and adolescent girls in eastern DRC encounter systemic barriers that restrict opportunity: limited access to quality education, few pathways to sustainable income, and social structures that can silence their voices. In some areas, ongoing instability has further strained already limited resources, making it harder for families to build sustainable futures..

Yet alongside these challenges is a powerful truth: local women are leading change every day. Across communities, women are organizing, pursuing education, launching businesses, advocating for environmental protection, and strengthening grassroots networks. Their leadership is not emerging - it is active and resilient. What is often missing are the resources and partnerships needed to help these solutions expand.

Hero Women Rising works within this context by investing in women-led organizations and initiatives designed by local leaders. Through education, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and advocacy training, women and girls gain practical tools to shape their own futures. When a young woman completes her education, gains technology skills, or launches a small business, the impact extends beyond the individual - families are supported and communities grow stronger.

Testimonies reflect what becomes possible when opportunity meets determination. With the right support, women are not only overcoming barriers - they are becoming leaders, providers, and change-makers.

Reframing the narrative means acknowledging both need and resilience. The challenges are real, but so is the leadership, momentum, and hope. When supporters invest in women and girls in eastern DRC, they join a story of strength, partnership, and lasting possibility.



Divine Iramuzi

“I need to save my people. If I have the opportunity to go to school, I will do something related to medicine. So, I chose Pharmacy.”

Meet Divine Iramuzi, a 21-year-old young woman whose life was transformed through the support of Hero Women Rising (Mama Shujaa).

After losing both parents at a young age, Divine faced an uncertain future. In 2018, she was accepted into Mama Shujaa’s Light of Hope program and everything changed. With support for her education, school materials, and ongoing encouragement, Divine completed high school and dared to dream bigger.

Today, Divine is a pharmacy student at Guizhou University in China, pursuing her calling to improve access to healthcare and serve her community. Despite visa denials, travel challenges, and cultural barriers, she never gave up and Mama Shujaa never left her side.



*A trained specialist
constructing an improved
cookstove.*

*A woman planting an
indigenous tree as part of
reforestation efforts*



*A displaced young
woman sewing an
African dress after
being trained by our
Kitenge Program.*



COMMUNICATIONS & DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

Sustaining the Momentum

“Enduring impact is not defined by growth alone, but by how intentionally we sustain, strengthen, and scale what matters most.”

In 2024, we focused on fueling the mission. In 2025, we built the discipline to sustain and scale it.

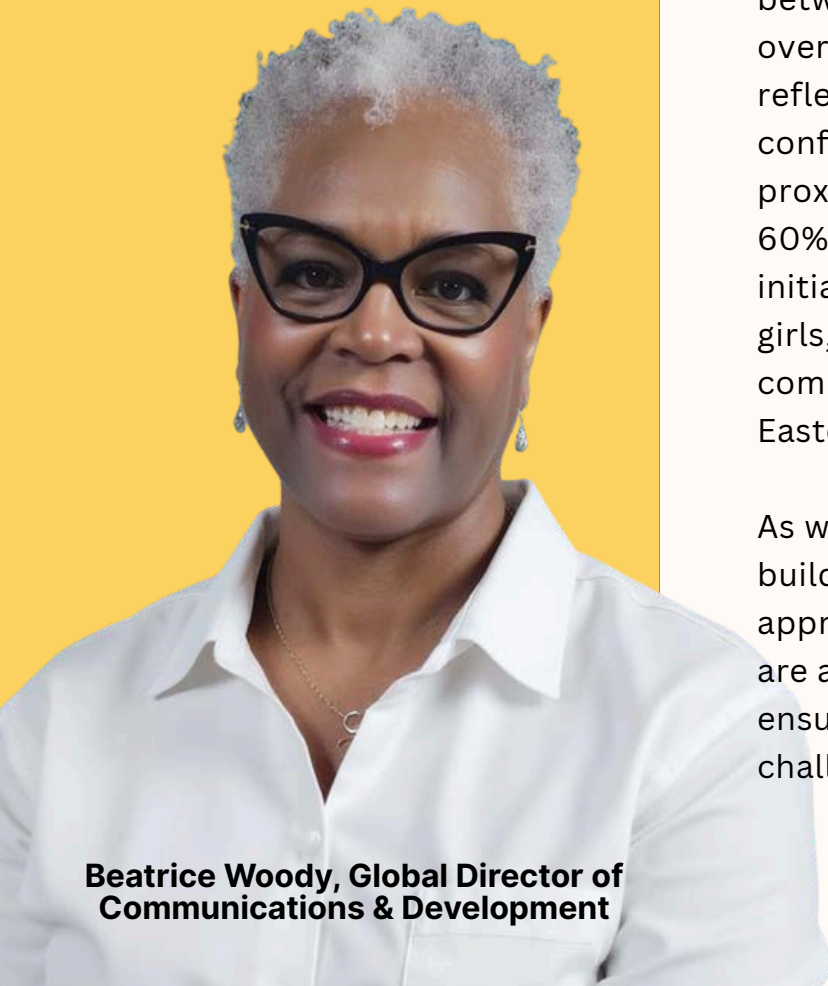
Hero Women Rising doubled its revenue between 2022 and 2025, generating over \$522,000 in 2025. This growth reflects increased investment and confidence in a model rooted in trust, proximity, and purpose. With more than 60% of funding directed toward initiatives that empower women and girls, we continued to strengthen community centered efforts in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

As we look ahead, we are intentionally building what works, strengthening our approach and expanding our reach. We are advancing locally led solutions, ensuring those closest to the challenges are leading the way forward,

while continuing to expand U.S. based partnerships to support the infrastructure and alignment needed for long term impact.

We are also investing in next generation leaders and emerging changemakers, whose global perspective and digital fluency are essential to the future of this work.

As a global organization, our communications approach remains intentional and evolving. We ensure our messaging resonates across cultures through accessible media that can be understood and shared worldwide. The stories of the women and girls we serve reflect a depth of resilience and leadership far beyond what is often seen, and we steward these stories with care to inform, connect, and inspire action.



Beatrice Woody, Global Director of Communications & Development

In 2025, we stepped into Washington, D.C., recognizing the importance of building awareness and relationships within our nation's capital. While external challenges, including the government shutdown, impacted early momentum, our direction remains clear. We are expanding visibility, strengthening partnerships, and elevating the voices of the Hero Women of Eastern DRC within key policy and philanthropic spaces.

We are no longer simply building momentum; we are sustaining it with intention. And in doing so, we are strengthening the foundation for what comes next. We move forward with clarity of purpose, strengthened by partnership, and committed to building a more just and hopeful future.

With gratitude for what we have built together and clarity for what lies ahead,



*Global Director,
Communications & Development*

**Locally Led.
Globally supported.
Sustainably Built.**

STRATEGIC FOCUS

Focused for Impact

- Locally Led Solutions
- U.S. Partnership Expansion
- Next Generation Leadership
- Global Communications Reach

WHAT'S NEXT

Looking Ahead

- Deepening investment in locally led solutions
- Expanding presence and partnerships in Washington, D.C.
- Strengthening board and leadership infrastructure
- Engaging next generation leaders and a digital storyteller
- Scaling global visibility through strategic communications

PROGRAMMATIC PILLARS

Each “E” reflects our mission to uplift, equip, and empower women and girls in eastern DRC through grants to grassroots, women-led organizations.

01

Emergency Response

In times of crisis, we stand with women and their families to ensure their most basic needs are met.

02

Economic & Social Development

We support programs that promote economic independence and social empowerment for women, helping them become active agents of change in their communities.

03

Education & Training

We believe education is a powerful tool for transformation. By investing in education and skills training, we unlock new possibilities for women and girls to thrive and lead.

04

Environmental Sustainability

Women are powerful stewards of the environment. We fund initiatives that address environmental challenges while equipping women to lead sustainable change



IMPACT YOU CAN SEE

In 2025, Mama Shujaa led programs supported through Hero Women Rising created meaningful change across eastern DRC - strengthening food security, education, environmental stewardship, and economic opportunity.



10,248
PEOPLE NOURISHED

Through community vegetable gardens managed by women-led cooperatives.



1,708
HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORTED

Families gained access to food production and income-generating agriculture.



130,000
TREE SEEDLINGS
CULTIVATED

Community nurseries advancing environmental restoration and climate resilience.



55 IMPROVED
COOKSTOVES

Reducing firewood consumption and improving household health.



55 SOLAR LAMPS
DISTRIBUTED

Expanding access to light for studying, safety, and community activities.

CHANGE YOU CAN MEASURE

Behind every number is a woman, a family, and a community building a stronger future in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

100+

**WOMEN TRAINED IN
ECONOMIC SKILLS**

Programs in digital literacy, sewing, and micro-business strengthened women's financial independence.



210 STUDENTS
EDUCATED

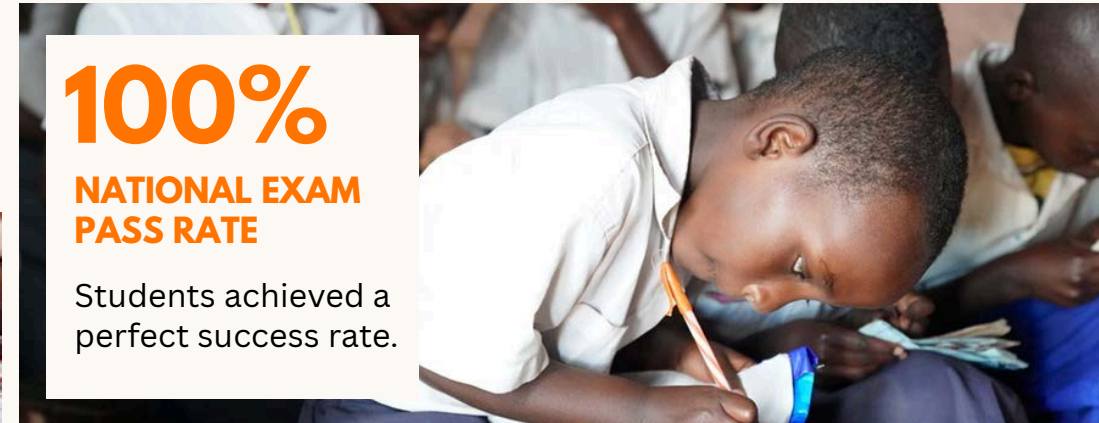
Providing critical access to learning for displaced children in the Mikenge IDP camp.



100%

**NATIONAL EXAM
PASS RATE**

Students achieved a perfect success rate.



2,000 MENSTRUAL
HEALTH KITS
DISTRIBUTED

Helping girls stay in school with dignity and confidence.



10 UNIVERSITY
GRADUATES

Including 7 medical professionals and 3 law graduates serving their communities.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



AISHA DEBERRY

We are honored to recognize the dedication of **Aisha DeBerry** and **Pat Alsup**, whose **leadership** and **volunteerism** have been instrumental in advancing the **mission** of Hero Women Rising. As Co-Chairs of the She Holds Tomorrow Gala, they generously gave their **time and resources** to **champion our cause**. Although the gala was postponed due to the government shutdown, their **commitment remained steadfast**, as **they rallied** to organize two private events to close out the year. We are deeply grateful for their continued support and championship of our mission.



PAT ALSUP



Thank you
TO OUR DONORS

“We don’t just raise funds; we mobilize resources for impact.”

Because of you, those resources are creating real change - strengthening communities, expanding opportunity, and empowering women and girls across eastern DRC. Thank you for being part of the impact.



OUR PARTNERS IN PURPOSE

We are deeply grateful to our partners whose strategic support strengthens our ability to invest in locally led solutions. Your partnership enables us to expand opportunity, deepen impact, and sustain meaningful change across communities in eastern DRC.



Interested in becoming a Hero Women Rising sponsor or partner?

**Please contact Beatrice Woody.
Email: beatrice@herowomenrising.org**

OUR HEROS

It's the collective power of everyday giving that keeps this mission moving forward. We're grateful you're part of it.

Not all heros wear capes...ours give.

- Aisha DeBerry ●
- Aiyana Ross
- Alex Dittman
- Amanda Valeur ●
- America's Charities
- Amy Roberts
- Anna Beck
- Annette Scarpitta
- Annie Callaway
- Barbara and Ted Seeley ● ●
- Barbara Meyer ● ●
- Beatrice Woody
- Becky Cronister
- Ben Orebaugh
- Benna Orlic
- Bernadette Odyniec
- Beverly Bell
- Beverly Hills Rotary
Community Foundation
- C. Pat Alsup
- California Community
Foundation
- Cardy Deriston
- Carol Head
- Caroline Barker
- Cedar Springs Church
- Cheryl Gregory Faye
- Chez Neal
- Choose Cheerful
- Chris Naylor
- Connie McCoy
- Cristina Alonso
- DAF Giving 360
- Danny Walters
- David Woody
- Debbie Baker
- Debbie Koo
- Denise Mitchell
- Don Steinberg
- Elizabeth Christine ●
- Elizabeth Davis ●
- Ellen Isaacs
- Ellen Kemper
- Emily Nolte
- Erica Stanojevic ●
- Erin Fleming
- Erin Marsh
- Fernanda Oliveira
- Gail Bernstein
- Gary Blankenship ●
- GeoFamily Foundation
- Harold Carey
- Heather Ferguson
- Hetty Asiodu
- Holthues Trust
- I. Murphy Lewis
- Isabella Castillo
- Isabelle Ghabash ●
- Jackie Taylor
- Jacquelyn Lendsey
- Jane Yates
- Jason West
- Jeanne Briggs
- Jeanne Cary ●
- Jeannette Hahn
- Jennifer Robert
- Jensine Larsen
- Jon Muir

**Hero Women Rising
Giving Circles**

● **Chairman's Circle**
Lifetime Individual Giving of \$15K+

● **RISE Solidarity Circle**
2025 Monthly Donors

● **Heroes Circle**
Every Donor is a Hero

“Your generosity is the foundation of every opportunity created.”

- Joyce Cope
- Judith Service Montier
- Julie Snyder
- Karen & David Leichenger
- Katarina Williamson
- Kate Lillis
- Katherine Coolidge
- Kim Anderson
- Kim Janke
- Kristin Nelson ●
- Lanetta Allen
- Laura Braswell
- Laretta Burke
- Laurie Emrich
- Lisa Finley
- Loren Deal
- Maggie Mermin & Susan Kennedy ●
- Makila James
- Margaret Kiernan
- Marie Kabila
- Marilyn Santiago
- Martina Llop Salas
- Mary Halton ●
- MCN Foundation
- Melvin Moore
- Meredith Vassell
- Miriam Leder
- Monica Shie
- National Philanthropic Trust
- Nisha Malla ●
- Olivia Owens
- Patrick Mutambo
- Patti Donehoo
- Paul & Natalie Freedman ●
- Pete & Hilary Giovale ●
- Philippa Moss ●
- Phoebe L Bailey
- Pierella Paci
- Renee Areng
- Richard Cecil
- Richard Murray
- RiseUp Health Network
- Rita Moran
- Robbie Jacobs
- Robert Pesek ●
- Rochez Neal
- Roy DeBerry
- Sandra J Ingram
- Sandy Pino
- Sarah Lopez ● ●
- Shayla Wright
- Sheila Couch ●
- Sidney Stern
- Sindhu Lakshmanan
- Stacey Briner
- Susan Barrett
- Sylvia S Tognetti
- Tammy Ross-Stern ●
- The Blackbaud Giving Fund
- Tineka Becker
- Tracy Chandler
- United Way of Central New Mexico
- Vanessa Williams
- Vicki Stickland
- Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) International

Hero Women Rising Giving Circles

● **Chairman's Circle**
Lifetime Individual Giving of \$15K+

● **RISE Solidarity Circle**
2025 Monthly Donors

● **Heroes Circle**
Every Donor is a Hero



IN LOVING MEMORY OF

COLONEL MUKALAY MUSHONDA JACQUES

This report is dedicated to the memory of the beloved father of Nkomezi Mukalay Espoir, Executive Assistant at Mama Shujaa. His father's legacy of working toward peace and fighting against discrimination and injustice lives on through the communities he loved and served.

