



Actions for the  
Reintegration  
Social of  
Women (ARSF)

<https://www.arsfemmerdc.org>

### Editorial board

- Madam Bibyshe MUNDJO  
TAKUBUSOGA
- Madam Rebecca Mpoyi
- Sir Raphaël MUSIMBI

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Photo of the ARSF Executive Secretary



Photo taken during the training workshop

## EDITORIAL

### Women activists in Bukavu at the forefront of digital resilience

In an increasingly connected world, digital technology has emerged as a powerful tool for *ARSF in a nutshell* mobilization, advocacy, and social change. Actions of the réintégration Social of However, for many women activists in the women (ARSF) is a Congolese non-Democratic Republic of Congo, this space for governmental organization that is expression remains fraught with obstacles: apolitical, non-denominational, and non-cyber harassment, hacking, misinformation, profit, registered under number and a lack of technical skills often hinder their JUST.GS.112/S-K/1782/2004. Its engagement. Aware of these challenges, methodological approach is based on the Actions of the Réintégration Social de la community development process, women (ARSF), with financial support from focused on the participation of women in CIVICUS, has launched a project in Bukavu decision-making. The main themes are to strengthen the digital resilience of women social justice and strengthening the socio-activists in the DRC. This innovative program economic self-reliance of women and girls aims to equip women to use digital technology in difficult situations. Since 2003, the not as a risk, but as a lever for empowerment association has been mobilizing and social impact. beneficiaries around concrete actions to strengthen solidarity through literacy, human rights awareness, the fight against rape and gender-based violence, health and HIV/AIDS, advocacy, and legal assistance.

**Ms. Bibyshe MUNDJO TAKUBUSOGA**

## Technology, for better or for worse

Empowering women and girls by 2030, although a noble goal, seems to be stalling in light of the many forms of discrimination they face.

One of the targets of this goal is to “Strengthen the use of key technologies, especially information and communications technology.” But we must ask ourselves: do all women and girls have equal access to information and communication technologies?

There is indeed a digital divide, an inequality between those who have access to information and communication technologies and those who are excluded from their content and services, which can be called the “digital divide,” highlighting concepts such as “info-rich” and “info-poor.” Technological developments that are completely changing the world are also fraught with challenges: targeted disinformation, crime, data piracy, insufficient transformational and strategic skills, protected content, hardware and software limitations, online attacks, etc. It turns out that despite the importance of using key technologies, particularly information and communications technology, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, the organization ARSF is experiencing limitations in terms of its ambitions, performance, and focus on results and sustainability.

### - Connectivity trapped!!!

The organization “Actions of the Réintégration Social of women” (ARSF) is committed to protecting and promoting women's legal rights. plagued by discrimination, exclusion, and abject poverty, yet in both rural and urban areas, they are the driving force behind the household economy. The organization has therefore developed strategies aimed at eliminating the obstacles to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, in this case, an advocacy program.

Considering the country's geographical dimensions and mode of governance, the organization has opted for an “online advocacy” strategy, which unfortunately faces many challenges, including the “digital divide,” in particular: the lack of a national legal framework to secure information, and limited access to digital tools, which is a major obstacle, as most women and girls in marginalized rural areas do not have access to smartphones or the Internet. This limits their ability to mobilize and participate in online debates.

### Women's capacity building

The challenges and other threats resulting from digital transformation (digital divides, insufficient or lack of digitally skilled workforce, a notable lack of cybersecurity preparedness, and a lack of investment and legal framework for data protection (confidential, sensitive, and restricted data) that could enable the organization to avoid negative impacts on its staff and beneficiaries or damage to its reputation) have placed the organization ARSF in its responsibilities: effectiveness (in response to the multiple problems and needs of women), performance and sustainability in a constantly changing context, and the achievement of its social objective.

The organization then set up a program that will ultimately guarantee reliability in information channels and emphasize “knowledge-based communication.”

This program was launched with a training workshop for women's rights activists living in vulnerable situations on the creation of “digital content” and “cybersecurity.” This 12-day initiative took place in the city of Bukavu, South Kivu Province (DR Congo), facilitated by an expert in digital communication and online security for seven activists,



five of whom are active in sister organizations partnering with ARSF and two of whom are ARSF employees.



selected on the basis of their professional profiles: communications officers, activists involved in lobbying and advocacy programs, IT technicians, and program managers. The diverse ARSF Board of Directors joined these recipients.

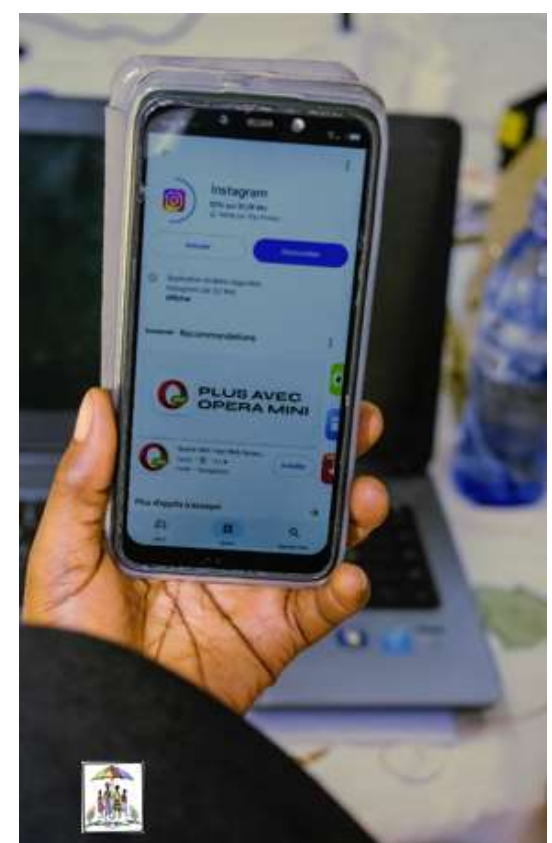




Photo taken during the training workshop

## Training Content

More specifically, the workshop aimed to strengthen the capacities and skills of the recipients in order to enable them to develop secure digital tools dedicated to supporting communication actions, by setting up a “secure and functional digital infrastructure” capable of improving the visibility and impact of online advocacy.

The medium- and long-term goal is to improve the participation and impact of ARSF and its partner organizations in the successful achievement of Sustainable Development Goal

5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,” through its target of: “Strengthen the use of key technologies, particularly information and communications technology, to empower women.”

The aim is therefore to promote the online advocacy program, which will undoubtedly lead Congolese lawmakers to adopt mechanisms to further improve cyber resilience, cyber deterrence, and cyber defense in the country.

The workshop was organized in two phases:

- the creation of digital content, and
  - an introduction to cybersecurity.
- The training methodology was based on the following approaches:

- Interactive and participatory presentations,
  - Practical exercises on computers and Smartphones,
  - Live demonstrations (account creation, security),
  - Group work and cyber risk simulations.
- Daily assessments with recommendations

The organization of the workshop did encounter certain constraints, notably:

- Uneven technical levels among participants (a challenge addressed through a strategy of individualized support to reassure them about the internet.
- Lack of personal computers among some recipients.

Special mention!!!!  
This activity was made possible thanks to the financial support of the organization “World Alliances for Civic Participation” (CIVICUS), to which the ARSF organization as a whole extends its sincere thanks and reiterates its desire to continue to enjoy its trust and goodwill.



## The recipients speak out and make recommendations:

- The subject matter is of unparalleled importance in the current global context: for there is no doubt that technology has enormous potential. But conversely, it is also being misused (for better or for worse) to spread false information, which often poses a direct threat to peace and stability in countries.



Photo taken during the training workshop

## Recommendations



Photo lors de l'atelier de formation

- Establish and implement an internal data security policy: combat data leaks, ensure ease of use, monitor data, protect sensitive data within the organization, etc.

- Raise user awareness of the potentially sensitive or confidential nature of the data they handle and help prevent accidental loss, particularly theft of equipment.

- Define the data to be protected and identify it so that users can recognize it when they encounter it (financial data, citizen or political claims), personally identifiable information (PII), sensitive data with limited distribution (e.g., security-related), confidential data, IP addresses, etc.

2. The training was really engaging, but the time allocated to it was disproportionate to the beneficiaries' expectations. Therefore, it would be desirable to:

- Implement knowledge management within the ARSF (Knowledge Management), which will enable knowledge to be used as a performance accelerator.

- Ensure smooth access to knowledge for those who need it within the organization.
- Help share knowledge and expertise by facilitating content creation and integrating communication tools to disseminate it (creating a collaborative dimension).
- Organize advanced sessions on digital transformation, digital strategies, editorial planning, engagement indicators, etc.
- Develop a simplified guide (a handbook) on cybersecurity for users (in French and Kiswahili).



### 3. Reduce or eliminate the digital divide between users

- Extend the initiative to other areas (remote rural areas and/or provinces).
- Acquire more equipment (investment)
- Build confidence in digital transformation.
- Continue distance learning through relevant and diverse channels, including digital content to be created in addition to that already learned in workshops.



### Activities in Pictures



Photo taken during the training workshop



Photo taken at the closing of the training workshop on digital content creation

## Environment: Women driving green strategic partnerships

In its mission to promote sustainable development and social justice, ARSF places women at the heart of the fight against global warming and environmental degradation. Convinced that ecological transition cannot succeed without them, the NGO supports the establishment of strategic green partnerships, where women become actors and leaders of change.

Through their community initiatives, women trained and supported by ARSF actively participate in responsible waste management, reforestation, water source preservation, and the promotion of clean energy. They are also involved in environmental education programs and raising awareness among households about sustainable ecological practices.

Strategic partnerships focus on environmentally sustainable economies and communities and resilience to climate hazards and other natural disaster risks. The geographical and sectoral universality of the Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved through the effective, efficient, and effective implementation of SDG 17 on “Global Partnership for Sustainable Development,” which requires:

- Strengthening the means of implementation, and
- Taking measures for its revitalization.

Target 16 of this goal is to: “Strengthen the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, associated with multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize and share knowledge, expertise,

Democracy and human rights. Women's and minority rights. Freedom of expression, thought, worship, and assembly. It is therefore essential to first and foremost understand the perspectives, needs, and interests of the country and its people, particularly in relation to climate challenges and other environmental issues.

And, without a doubt, it is only through a collaborative approach and local ownership that we can hope to move beyond the desirable (and no longer just the “trend” or ‘probable’) on the scale of strategic choices to be made to “save humanity” and build a sustainable future, energy efficiency, fossil fuels, hybrid systems, water-related disaster risks, air quality, waste management, food loss, clean energy or clean combustion science and technology, environmental health, etc.

Women's responsibilities in “building” the “Global Partnership for Sustainable Development” are clearly highlighted by several targets of many relevant SDGs. Women and girls are, more than men and boys, both agents and victims of climate hazards and exposed to the risks associated with certain household chores and other economic activities such as agricultural and food production.



technology, and financial resources, in order to help all countries, especially developing countries, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.”

It should be noted that, apart from the traditional goals concerning poverty, health, and education, SDGs 5 and 10 specifically address women's rights to development, while SDGs 12, 15, 6, 11, 13, and 14 focus exclusively on “global public goods” (climate, biodiversity, etc.). Similarly, and remarkably, the various targets covered by the SDGs include social inclusion (hence the notion of equality) and the conservation and management of natural resources. Social inclusion, which derives from the social pillar of the UN's 2030 Agenda (the SDGs), embodies a relationship of complementarity rather than subordination.

Conversely, women's potential in the production and use of climate solutions, both in households and within communities, is generally either ignored or simply neglected and undervalued, simply because it is female.

This is a problem with cultural dimensions, always referring to “femininity” in the background. However, the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO) recognizes the specific nature of culture as an important factor in economic and social development, and that cultural diversity, a common heritage of humanity, creates a rich and varied world that broadens choices, nourishes human capacities and values, and is therefore a fundamental driver of the sustainable development of communities, peoples, and nations, that it flourishes in a framework of democracy, tolerance, social justice, and mutual respect among peoples and cultures, and that it is indispensable to peace and security at the local, national, and international levels, etc.

The commitment of women and girls to the cause of climate change adaptation and green growth must therefore be based on a set of strong values, founded on cooperation and solidarity (local, national, supranational, and international) and respect for international law.



This is the case with the management of untreated wastewater, open defecation, the use of non-potable water (river water, unprotected wells, etc.), vegetation fires, deforestation, fuel oil or charcoal stoves, household waste incineration, waterfalls, eutrophication, waste dumping, pollution (air, water, etc.), chemical emissions, water-related ecosystems (forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers, lakes, etc.), etc. Paradoxically, however, for the vast majority of the Congolese population, these activities are the pillars of the domestic economy.

The strategy based on “green strategic partnerships” led by women and girls is therefore founded on a “green revolution” of skills based on gender equality and women's empowerment, training, science, technology, and innovation, supported by the promotion of transformative leadership (at all levels).



To this end, women's (traditional) knowledge and skills in the preservation and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems in particular, and in climate change adaptation and the just green transition, will need to be further improved and enriched through exchanges with other cultures. It is as if the realization of this ambition will be the work of a certain kind of public cultural diplomacy capable of offering competitive solutions (politically, technologically, psychologically). This is the case with the management of untreated wastewater, open defecation, the use of non-potable water (river water, unprotected wells, etc.), vegetation fires, deforestation, fuel oil or charcoal stoves, household waste incineration, waterfalls, eutrophication, waste dumping, pollution (air, water, etc.), chemical emissions, water-related ecosystems (forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers, lakes, etc.), etc. Paradoxically, however, for the vast majority of the Congolese population, these activities are the pillars of the domestic economy.



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Photo taken at the closing of the training workshop on digital content creation

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## Access to Rights: Sexual and Reproductive Health. Breaking the Silence, Myths, Taboos, and Stigma.

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In line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whose flagship goal is “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,” the ARSF organization is also committed to “ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health care for all and ensuring that every woman aged 15 to 49 makes her own informed decisions about her sexual relations, contraceptive use, and reproductive health care, and to have equitable and unrestricted access to information and education in this area.

The ARSF organization has therefore set up a comprehensive program aimed at improving conditions related to access for young people and adolescent girls to menstrual and personal hygiene management with a view to promoting SRH. Following a mini-study conducted in poor neighborhoods on the outskirts of South Kivu Province and the city of Kinshasa, the program officer within the organization organized a training-of-trainers workshop with the aim of strengthening their capacities and skills in “menstrual management, which, in the local context and culture,” is surrounded by silence, concerns (due to ignorance or misinformation) among women and girls (from menarche to menopause), myths, taboos, and other stigmas, as well as many other challenges. The recipients-communicators thus improved their knowledge of the problems and needs of women and girls in terms of sexual health and the manufacture and management of local reusable menstrual pads. They have been committed to training students, organized into health clubs (sexual and reproductive), and making sanitary pads, samples of which have been distributed to pubescent girls in certain local schools.

This led to a significant reduction in the school dropout rate among girls caused by problems related to menstruation, according to the follow-up evaluation report following the training. The project aims to collect data on the incidence and prevalence of diseases related to menstrual hygiene problems among young girls and adolescents.



**Ms. Rebecca MPOYI Kamuanya**  
ARSF Program Manager.

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Photo taken at the closing of the training workshop on digital content creation

## Violence against women and girls: unacceptable and reprehensible.

Violence against women constitutes a form of discrimination and a violation of human rights. This is the leitmotif of the radio programs produced by the Executive Secretary of ARSF and Ms. Rebecca Mpoyi Kamuanya, Program Officer at ARSF, broadcast on several community radio stations in the city of Bukavu and Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

During the awareness-raising programs, they demonstrated that violence against women is a global, systemic phenomenon rooted in the imbalance of power and structural inequality between men and women, and that it reflects historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination and discrimination by men and hindered the advancement of women.

She added that violence against women is committed in different contexts: within the family and within the community, violence perpetrated or tolerated by the state, emphasizing that there are forms and manifestations of violence that are neglected or simply little or not at all studied or documented. Her presentation also focused on groups of women who are particularly vulnerable to violence, including women belonging to minorities, indigenous women and refugees, women without resources, women in institutions or detention, women with disabilities, women with disabilities, older women, and women in armed conflicts.

Referring to the provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, she outlined the series of measures to be taken by States to prevent and eliminate such violence, in particular, the obligation for States to condemn violence against women and never to invoke customary, traditional, or religious considerations to evade their obligation to eliminate it.

The communication drew heavily on the provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action, particularly its critical area on violence against women, whose strategic objectives are:

- To take concerted action to prevent and eliminate violence against women;
- To study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures;
- Eliminate trafficking in women and assist women who are victims of violence related to prostitution and trafficking.



Photo taken during a radio broadcast

## Podcasts produced as part of the project “Strengthening the digital resilience of women activists in the DRC.”

As part of the project Strengthening the Digital Resilience of Women Activists in the DRC, funded by the NGO CIVICUS, the NGO ARSF was able to produce four podcasts broadcast on its YouTube channel, ARS Femme Rdc, to raise public awareness of important issues and topics of community interest.

### Podcast 1: Raising awareness about menstrual hygiene and reusable sanitary pads:

An educational podcast aimed at promoting menstrual health, dignity, and empowerment for girls and young women. It highlights the importance of reusable sanitary pads for sustainable and environmentally friendly access.



### Podcast 2: The role of NGOs in the DRC

Podcast discussing and providing information on the crucial role of NGOs, with a focus on the actions of the NGO ARSF based in eastern DRC. It explores how local and regional organizations support the protection of human rights, women's empowerment, and community development.



### Podcast 3: Popularizing the African Convention to End Violence Against Women and Girls

Podcast explaining in simple and accessible terms the African Convention adopted in Addis Ababa in February 2025. The aim is to raise awareness among communities, strengthen understanding of women's rights, and encourage collective action to end gender-based violence.



### Podcast 4: Results of the project Strengthening the digital resilience of women activists in the DRC

Podcast detailing the achievements and concrete impacts of the project led by the NGO ARSF. We explore how digital resilience is transforming the engagement of Congolese women activists and their ability to defend their rights.

