



# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

**ABOVE:** Dr. Furaha Bisimwa is a nurse trained through IMA World Health's Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Kit project in the eastern part of the DRC who supports survivors of gender-based violence.

The Corus International family of organizations has worked throughout Sub-Saharan Africa for over five decades with a focus on improving women's health, addressing gender-based violence (GBV), supporting girls' education and advancing women's economic and social empowerment.

IMA World Health leads health programming for Corus, strengthening health systems to improve the lives of millions of women with integrated interventions that combat GBV, expand social and behavior change communication around women's empowerment and promote access to family planning and maternal, newborn and child health care.

Leading Corus' women's and girls' socioeconomic empowerment work, Lutheran World Relief and CGA Technologies strengthen market access for women entrepreneurs and support youth changemakers to advance girls' education and build social protection systems. Additionally, Ground Up Investing, Corus' impact investing practice, uses an equity stake model in Sub-Saharan Africa to grow mission-driven enterprises which generate increased income for smallholder producers and increase access to opportunity for women and youth. Together, we deliver meaningful impact and have played a pivotal role in transforming women's lives across the region.

We employ a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) lens throughout programming in Sub-Saharan Africa utilizing our IDEAL approach, which stands for intersectionality, delivery, equity, access and leadership. The approach, originally developed to prioritize women's voices and needs

in agricultural communities, can be applied across sectors to recognize how individuals' diverse identities, such as age, race, religion, geography, class and gender, influence their access to resources and opportunities for equitable participation in decision-making processes. This inclusive strategy also informs our comprehensive technical approach for preventing, mitigating and responding to GBV in all of its forms.

Our work to champion women and girls is also guided by our longstanding accompaniment methodology, which centers individuals and organizations from the communities we serve as the primary agents of change. We collaborate with local experts, trainers and organizations to ensure that interventions are contextually relevant and responsive. In prioritizing capacity strengthening and partnership, we understand that our role may take various forms depending on local priorities and sustainability needs. Whether acting as technical specialists, conveners or intermediaries, Corus organizations facilitate connections between local partners, the government and the private sector, enabling communities to access knowledge, resources and networks for long-term inclusive development.



## PREVENTING, MITIGATING AND RESPONDING TO GBV (DRC)

Since 2010, IMA World Health has led the implementation of programs in the DRC aimed at addressing GBV, supporting survivors, and strengthening health systems and response mechanisms. Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by IMA World Health, the Counter-Gender Based

**THE CORUS EFFECT:** Corus International is an international development organization that unites an array of nonprofit organizations and businesses, each with specialized expertise – from health to technology to economic development to emergency response. Alongside communities and local partners in fragile settings, our expert teams integrate disciplines, approaches and resources to overcome poverty and suffering for those living in the world's most difficult circumstances.

Violence (known as Tushinde Ujeuri in Swahili) program's holistic approach to addressing GBV incorporates social and financial recovery, in addition to medical care and psychosocial support. The programming builds on previous GBV prevention and response activities in the eastern DRC and advocates for the protection of marginalized groups including members of the LGBTQI+ community. Funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, IMA World Health also procures and distributes Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Kits, reducing a survivor's risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.



### **CHAMPIONING GIRLS' EDUCATION (SOUTH SUDAN)**

Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) is an inclusive program that transforms the lives of a generation of children in South Sudan – especially girls and those in the margins of society – through education. CGA Technologies created and led the South Sudan Schools' Attendance Monitoring System (sssams.org), cash transfer and capitation grants components of GESS. With CGA Technologies support, GESS provided cash transfers directly to girls from the most vulnerable households to be used for school fees and other needs, resulting in their increased enrollment and retention. Such outcomes decrease girls' vulnerability, as education has a direct impact on reducing the incidence of GBV and especially child, early and forced marriages. Over seven years of GESS, total enrollment in South Sudan tripled and girls' enrollment quadrupled.



### **UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL NORMS TO ADVANCE FAMILY PLANNING (NIGER, SOUTH SUDAN)**

In 2021, IMA World Health led an assessment in South Sudan to identify barriers to improved social norms and increased access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health services. Building on the assessment's success and leveraging Lutheran World Relief's long-standing relationships with partners in some of the most underserved areas of Niger, IMA World Health is replicating the social norms assessment in Niger through our Context Matters project. With the support of the John Templeton Foundation, we are utilizing youth-focused participatory action research

to examine sociocultural and religious norms and develop culturally responsive family planning programs. Together, the findings from these studies will continue to improve access to and use of essential family planning and sexual and reproductive health services in challenging contexts.



### **ADVANCING WOMEN'S HEALTH IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS (REGIONAL)**

IMA World Health leads the five-year, USAID-funded MOMENTUM Integrated Health Resilience program, which is part of a suite of innovative MOMENTUM awards designed to holistically strengthen quality voluntary family planning, reproductive health, and maternal, newborn, and child health in host countries around the world including Burkina Faso, DRC, Mali, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Yemen. Working alongside local organizations, governments, and humanitarian and development partners in fragile settings, the project helps accelerate reductions in maternal, newborn, and child illness and death by increasing the capacity of host country institutions and local organizations – including new and underutilized partners – to introduce, deliver, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based, quality care. While addressing GBV through community-based, gender-responsive approaches, the project trains facilitators on male engagement strategies, empowers youth action teams and centers community health workers in supporting survivors.



### **LEARNING FOR GENDER INTEGRATION (UGANDA)**

Uganda was one of the countries in which Lutheran World Relief piloted the Learning for Gender Integration (LGI) project, an initiative to address gender-based constraints that men and women farmers face while assessing food insecurity and low income. The project focused on training men about the benefits of allocating more land for their wives and investing in inputs for their wives' family gardens. Men and women participating in the project increased their incomes by 78% and 125%, respectively. Women reported that, as a result of the project, they now sit down with their husbands to discuss how to invest the family's resources, instead of such decisions being left to the husbands alone.



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