

## Ushindi

### A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN THE DRC

#### FUNDING LEVEL

\$16 million • 2010 – 2014

#### DONOR

USAID

#### PARTNERS

Program for Promotion of Primary Health Care (PPSSP), HEAL Africa, The Panzi Foundation, American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative, Save the Children, Children's Voice

#### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Significant gains in SGBV awareness and response have been achieved through the Ushindi Project; results through September 2014 include:

- 22,073 survivors counseled for psychosocial support.
- 13,180 survivors receiving medical support at the health center level.
- 3,960 survivors receiving legal counsel for SGBV-related acts.
- 2,669 cases referred to jurists for prosecution.
- 9 safe houses established and functioning.
- 395 community leaders trained.
- 580 health service providers trained.
- 25,438 persons assisted with microfinance grants.
- 9,856 forums to discuss the collective and individual impact of SGBV.
- 110 children's community groups strengthened.

#### BACKGROUND

Involving women in decision-making bodies is necessary for the sustainable development of communities. However, studies conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) show that women are often overwhelmed with ensuring their own survival due to violence and frequent pregnancies, which keeps them in poverty.

Although most frequently associated with ongoing conflicts, the problem of sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the



*Ushindi integrates socioeconomic, legal, psychosocial, and health interventions to support survivors of SGBV in the DRC.*

eastern DRC has its roots in pre-existing chronic and unequal gender relations. To address this, efforts have been underway to assist survivors of SGBV, combat impunity, empower women to enjoy their rights, and engage communities in long-term attitude change.

#### PROJECT APPROACH

Since July 2010, IMA World Health (IMA) has led a five-year USAID-funded project in the DRC called Ushindi, which means "we overcome" in Swahili. The Ushindi Project takes a holistic approach, integrating socioeconomic, legal, psychosocial, and health interventions to both support survivors of SGBV and to prevent SGBV in eastern DRC. The project aims to increase access to timely and quality services for individuals affected by SGBV; improve the quality of services and interventions for individuals and communities affected by SGBV; and reduce the vulnerability of individuals to future acts of abuse and violence.

Ushindi's activities target 10 health zones (Lolwa, Komanda, Mutwanga, Lubero, Alimbongo, Obokote, Ferekeni, Mwenga, Shabunda, and Kitutu) within the Orientale, North Kivu, Maniema, and South Kivu provinces in eastern DRC (an approximate population of 1.1 million). Interventions include

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the establishment of literacy circles and Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) micro-projects to provide opportunities for income generating activities. VSLAs generate benefits that address the basic needs of households (food, medical care, home improvement) and also strengthen social cohesion. As the project is in its fifth year, an integrated exit strategy to promote community ownership and sustainability has been developed by Ushindi partners with the support of key local actors, including youth clubs, SGBV committee members, community core groups (called Noyaux Communautaires), and local authorities.

