

Generation RISE



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

www.generationrise.org

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INTRODUCTION

A message from our Executive Director

As we reflect on 2023, I am beyond amazed by the remarkable progress we have made together. Our collective efforts this year have not only created opportunities for girls to pursue higher education, but have also empowered them to create space to educate their fellow sisters in their own communities. Their motivation and ability to drive sustainable change in their communities is the most incredible testimony and demonstration of the girls' agency.

As I always share, we are a community-based organization with big dreams and immense gratitude for our partners and supporters; this was another year in which our wishes came true, in large part due to those who joined us on this journey to increase the representation of women in higher education in Rwanda. In 2023, we launched our innovative scholarship program, *Be that Girl*, to ensure all girls - especially the most vulnerable - have equal access to quality education. In addition to the provision of financial aid and mentorship, our efforts will continue to focus on advocating for effective and sustainable ways to improve girls' access to education as well as a renewed interest in addressing barriers to higher education.

This report highlights our activities and achievements in various projects that aim to empower young girls in Rwanda. Our organization remains committed to making a positive impact in the lives of these girls by collaborating with other key actors in order to provide holistic solutions to the issue to the barriers that still prevent girls to achieve higher education.

A special thank you to the Segal Family Foundation, Be That Girl Foundation, World Connect, and Global Giving for their continued support, as well as our incredible supporters, friends, and families who have been with us on this journey. We could not do this without you and look forward to another year of growth and empowerment.

Solange IMPANOYIMANA
Executive Director, Generation Rise



WHO WE ARE

VISION

A gender equitable world where all people can be leaders and advocates for positive change in their communities.

MISSION

To cultivate an inspiring generation of young women and leaders who are valued, equipped and encouraged to articulate and realize their dreams for themselves and for their communities.

APPROACH

Generation Rise uses a novel approach - literature - as a catalyst to empower women and girls to ask questions, think critically about themselves and their societies, and voice their opinions on issues that determine their futures, and that of their peers and communities.

Key Achievements



Expanded Her Voice Matters program through new partnerships with secondary schools (pages 5-7)



Integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights awareness and advocacy activities into our programs to improve access to information and services (pages 7-10)



Launched Be That Girl scholarship program to support young women in higher education (pages 11-14)



Expanded our new project, Ignite, which equips girls with entrepreneurial and financial skills as they search for jobs and begin to earn income (page 15)

Her Voice Matters (HVM) Program

Expanding Her Voice Matters program through new partnerships with secondary schools

Through our core program, “Her Voice Matters,” 120 girls participated in monthly workshops, equipping them with the soft skills and tools they need to overcome challenges, achieve at school and pursue higher education. Our trainings cover a range of topics, including but not limited to goal setting, effective communication, leadership, seeking out opportunities and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).



HVM participants have expressed appreciation for the skills they have gained from the sessions as well as the support and solidarity they feel with each other. They have also expressed gratitude for the volunteer teachers who work closely with Generation Rise to provide guidance and support as needed. The cumulative skills they have gained, coupled with peer and teacher support, will undoubtedly continue to lead girls down the right path and enable them to succeed in their academic journey.



It has also been inspiring to see previous graduates of HVM act as role models to their fellow sisters in the program as well as other members of their respective communities. One of many HVM graduates with a similar story, Louise shares her journey of hope, empowerment and higher education below. We look forward to witnessing countless more girls achieve the confidence and tools to realize their dreams.



Louise's transformational journey

I am Uwiringiyimana Louise. I am 24-years-old and graduated from high school at G.S. Gahanga in 2019. I am currently an undergraduate student majoring in Kiswahili and English with Education at the University of Rwanda. I am the fourth of six children. I live in a rural area in Kicukiro district, Gahanga sector, Rwabutenge cell, at Karambo village. I was enrolled in the Her Voice Matters program from 2018-2019.

Before participating in Generation Rise, I didn't believe in myself. I was shy and unable to express my feelings and opinions. I struggled to do things on my own without support, lacked confidence, and couldn't speak in public, even when it was necessary. Despite having opinions, I kept them to myself due to shyness. I constantly questioned what others would think if I spoke in front of them; the fear of being laughed at held me back. In conflicts, my lack of confidence prevented me from addressing issues with others. I faced challenges such as losing school materials and finishing my homework due to other chores. I was so shy when presenting in front of my classmates, they made me feel like I needed to drop out of school. It was not an easy situation for me.

In 2018, when I enrolled in Her Voice Matters, the lessons helped me overcome fear and feel more capable and confident. I learned how to initiate business ideas and initiatives. Through the lessons, I discovered the importance of connecting with others, sharing my challenges to find solutions, and building confidence. I stopped thinking that opportunities only belong to boys; I realized that they are equally available to us girls. I learned to collaborate effectively with others in our group to pursue common interests. I began to confront the challenges around me, dismissing thoughts of dropping out of school. Instead, I chose to stay strong and made decisions that would contribute to my success in my studies. Expressing my challenges and learning to ask for support became crucial when I successfully passed my national exams. Due to my family's financial background, they couldn't provide the additional requirements needed

to accept the government scholarship I earned. In this situation, I approached Generation Rise representatives and raised my issue. They supported me financially, enabling me to continue my studies. This assistance made me feel successful and grateful for the support I received.

Generation Rise has been my foundation, shaping who I am today as an undergraduate ready to complete my studies. Their financial assistance played a crucial role in enabling me to register at the university, marking the first step toward my success. I am grateful to Generation Rise for giving me hope for my future, knowing I can make a respectable income while pursuing my interests. Their support has been instrumental in my journey. Now, as I look ahead, I see a promising future, and I attribute it all to Generation Rise. The advice I would give to the current beneficiaries of Generation Rise is to always value the lessons they receive. This organization should not be seen as just another thing; it is a family that stands for supporting girls. Through Generation Rise, you will learn to set your own goals, and they will assure you that no matter what challenges you face, you are strong enough to handle them. It is a supportive community that provides valuable lessons. I truly appreciate your passion and commitment.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Integrating sexual and reproductive health and rights education into our programs

This year, we focused on developing youth-friendly, visual materials on SRHR-related topics for the adolescent girls enrolled in our programs, which are available in designated safe spaces at every school we partner with. In addition to using the materials for their own education, the girls and their teachers have used them to facilitate awareness raising activities in their schools and communities. To further expand their knowledge and expertise on SRHR topics, 50 girls were selected to take part in an intensive, six-month workshop series to build their capacity as SRHR peer educators, or “Girls Rights Champions.” Our Girls Rights Champions have since conducted various activities to provide accurate information on SRHR to youth in their schools and communities, and continue to ensure their peers have access to this information as well as referrals to available services.

Leading by example: SRHR awareness raising at schools

In collaboration with volunteer teachers, Girls Rights Champions conducted awareness raising events on SRHR at three schools: GS Gahanga I, GS Rwabutenge, and GS Kabuga Catholique in Kicukiro and Gasabo district. These events brought together more than 2000 students and provided a space for them to learn accurate information on topics such as abortion law, consent, teenage pregnancy and bodily autonomy. Girls Rights Champions also used this opportunity to inform other students where the SRHR services can be accessed as well as encourage them to break the silence around the SRHR issues. These initiatives continue to be instrumental in reaching more girls and ensuring that they are empowered to challenge harmful social and gender norms which still hinder them from achieving higher education.

Being a Girls Rights Champion gave me confidence to speak in public and educate my peers. The training helped me develop skills in active listening and responding to questions. I genuinely appreciate your belief in me.

- Uwase Jesca, Girls Rights Champion, Gahanga



Students attending an awareness raising event at Gahanga High school while a Girls Rights Champion led dialogue on topics such as bodily autonomy, abortion law, teenage pregnancy and consent.



Students gathering at Rwabutenge school to listen to the Girls Right Champion

Before attending this event, I did not know where I could report cases of sexual or gender-based violence, but now I know that institutions such as Isange One Stop Center exist. This knowledge will make a significant difference in addressing gender-based violence

- Participant in awareness raising event

Fostering collaboration among parents, teachers and duty bearers

Generation Rise provided training sessions to diverse groups of people including adolescent girls and their parents, teachers from the various schools we work with, National Youth Coordinators (NYCs) from different divisions of Kicukiro and Gasabo districts, as well as health providers from different health and youth centers. The workshops brought together around 160 participants, including 120 parents, 20 volunteer teachers, 20 youth representatives for SRHR and focused on SRHR-related topics, such as gender-based violence (GBV), power dynamics, ministerial abortion law, and bodily autonomy. These spaces allowed participants to reflect on how to ensure girls are supported and have the information they deserve to make informed decisions. Their long-term goal is to think critically about societal norms and shift the negative mindset that still prevents girls from fully enjoying their rights to sexual and reproductive health and perpetuates harm among young people, such as increased teenage pregnancy and HIV in communities. Participants also took time to evaluate their level of collaboration and committed to improve and address any gaps in providing holistic solutions to the issues that youth face.

I consider myself a shy person. It is not easy to talk in public, but participating in Generation Rise's training helped me see the importance of presenting my ideas and discover my power to overcome my shyness and express my opinions in a public forum.

- Muhoza Annualithe, G.S. Kabuga





Parents committee attending the workshop in Gahanga



Duty bearers in a group discussion

I will always encourage parents to have conversations with their children and earn their trust and friendship. I now understand how important that is.

- Uwizeye Liliane, Nurse at Gahanga Health Center



A workshop for volunteer teachers

The workshop inspired me to use the knowledge I have gained throughout my life to encourage my colleagues to challenge negative social norms and promote gender equality and equity

- Nishimwe Odette, Volunteer teacher GS Gahanga

Be That Girl Scholarship Program

Launching the Be That Girl scholarship program

Launching the Be That Girl (BTG) scholarship was another major accomplishment of 2023. This scholarship program assists young women in Rwanda who have been rewarded government scholarships to attend university, but face financial and mentorship barriers preventing their attendance. BTG scholarship recipients receive comprehensive support complementing their government-funded scholarships for the entire four years of university, including financial aid, mentorship, and training to succeed in their academic pursuits and beyond. The first cohort is comprised of eight girls who are majoring in various fields, such as education and agri-business, among others. As we continue to support young women from rural communities in pursuing their dreams at university for years to come, this scholarship will play a large part in addressing the gender gap in higher education in Rwanda.



In addition to financial support, Generation Rise hosts workshops on essential skills such as time management, self-awareness, and public speaking for BTG recipients. Through the workshops, the girls acquired skills that not only contributed to their personal development, but also affirmed their ability to be agents of change in their own lives and their communities. The positive impact of these diverse trainings is evident in the girls' testimonies, demonstrating the effects of the program in fostering growth and empowerment.

BTG-GR has shown that I am capable. I actively participate in class presentations, just like boys do. I take on roles in class and lead others in group activities. I want to show others that these things are possible

- Umwari Faith, BTG-GR Scholar, Busogo Campus

From the moment I learned about Generation Rise and became a part of the BTG-GR scholarship program, my life underwent a complete transformation. You've been instrumental in creating happiness in my daily life, whether I'm at school or home during holidays. I used to believe that there were no people out there who could support and empower us in our daily lives.

- Uwase Angelique, age 22, BTG-GR Scholar

Discovering Generation Rise has been invaluable. The training you provided on attending and cherishing school, time management, and prioritization enabled me to excel in my studies. The financial support, including a computer, instilled a sense of courage and value in me, and I realized that there are people who always hold positive thoughts about me. The valuable advice you offer continues to guide me in being cautious, both at school and at home. This all signifies that your efforts have not been in vain.

- Uwase Emelyne, age 21, BTG-GR Scholar



Giving back to the community

In September, BTG recipients from Nyagatare Campus collaborated with Girls Rights Champions from our Her Voice Matters program to organize an awareness raising event on SRHR in Museri Sector, Nyagatare District. More than 500 youth attended the event. The event's topics included but are not limited to safe abortion, bodily autonomy and consent, types of GBV and existing reporting mechanisms and referrals to support GBV survivors. Witnessing the girls in our programs taking the lead to bridge the above gap is a true testimony to why it is important to continue nurturing a generation of valued, skilled, inspired and powerful young women. The event was a great platform to empower youth attendees with knowledge and skills to break the silence around GBV and SRHR issues in their respective communities.



BTG recipients, Beatrice and Rose, doing a role play during the event

The girls' ability to collaborate and engage local authorities was so commendable. It was clear that the girls are now confident and capable to mobilize and engage duty bearers in advocacy and other community-based initiatives. As a result of the girls' efforts to approach various stakeholders and leaders, the event was well attended by local authorities including Businge Winnie in charge of Youth Social Welfare at Nyagatare district, Ukwishaka Titien, in charge of Good Governance at Museri sector, Habanushaka Jean de Dieu, National Youth Council coordinator at Museri Sector and Dr Dusengimana Emmanuel, a medical doctor at Museri Sector. They all congratulated girls for their efforts in organizing such a needed event to educate youth and they expressed their commitment to supporting the young generation to take a lead in improving their community wellbeing and development at large.

The trainings heightened my awareness about abortion laws, offering assistance to those in need. I learned the importance of playing my role and accessing accurate information. Now, I am more self-aware of my rights and capabilities. I engage in advocacy by sharing these skills, particularly with the youth. With support from GR staff, I disseminated these skills at my school and in my home community in Nyagatare. This positive experience has made me feel valuable and capable.

- Kayitesi Alice, Focal Point



Audience participating in dialogue and sharing their ideas

We're truly thankful for this partnership, as it marks the first step in our efforts to educate youth, especially girls on SRHR and combat HIV during this Youth Month. Your lessons have enlightened us, clarifying the difference between child defilement and rape, which will greatly help in our mobilization efforts. We're all filled with gratitude and enthusiasm, and we'll ensure that this knowledge reaches those who couldn't be present today.

- National Youth Council Coordinator at Mushiri Sector

PROJECT IGNITE

Increasing financial support for project Ignite

Project Ignite was originally founded to equip Her Voice Matters graduates with the skills to run community-based businesses. In 2023, we organized refresher workshops on the skills they previously acquired to run their businesses and worked collaboratively to brainstorm strategies and solutions to overcome the various challenges they have been facing. The workshop also provided space and guidance for the Together We Can Do Better and Ikirezi groups to develop their internal regulations and codes of conduct to improve their way of working and mitigate conflicts among members.

In March 2023, Generation Rise proudly extended financial support to the first, successful team from one of our partner schools, GS Gahanga I, in our *Ignite* program called “Together We Can Do Better.” This funding was intended to bolster their existing business, which originally began with limited capital. The team's collective goal centered on gaining more experience, increasing their income, and advancing their activities, particularly in the realm of poultry farming. The financial support provided by Generation Rise aims to empower and uplift these young entrepreneurs, fostering the growth of their business endeavors and contributing to their overall success with also their parents’ support.



Expanding project Ignite to “out-of-school” girls

Through new partnerships with GS Rubingo and GS Agateko in Jali Sector, we provided leadership training and peer support to 25 girls who had dropped out of school due to teen pregnancy, limited family support and other reasons. We are actively looking for new partners to collaborate in supporting these girls in running their own community-based businesses.



Highlights in pictures



GR at an advocacy event
for the SRHR network



Generation Rise team



GR joined other actors during 16 days of activism to raise awareness of gender-based violence and teen pregnancy. Together with MIGEPROF, we conducted successful campaigns at our partner schools.

Contact Information

For more information about Generation Rise, our current programs, volunteer and internship opportunities, or how to donate, check out our website www.generationrise.org or contact us directly at:

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On behalf of the entire team at Generation Rise, thank you and happy new year!