

# Action pour le Développement du Peuple



**Action pour le Développement du Peuple (ADEPE)** started as an urgent psychosocial support program for women, youth, and children traumatized by prolonged warfare. Situated in Gisenyi, five kilometers from Rwanda's border with the Democratic Republic of Congo, ADEPE initiated their programs by supporting, reintegrating, and building up the economic empowerment of former child soldiers. ADEPE's efforts expanded to address the effects the genocide and war on widows and children, with an integrated program of support that addressed the health, education, psychosocial, and legal protection needs.

*ADEPE was funded by the Firelight Foundation as a partner in the Nike Foundation Grassroots Girls Initiative 3.0*



***“If you educate a girl, you are educating the nation because she is the future mother of [Rwanda]”***

## Why Girls?

In Rwanda,

- **Less than 50%** the girls aged 19 have completed secondary school
- **Half** of adolescent girls say that money limits their access to healthcare
- **18%** of girls report that they don't have a say on how their earnings are spent

*Source: The Adolescent Experience in-Depth: Using Data to Identify and Reaching the Most Vulnerable Young People. Rwanda 2010. New York: Population Council, 2013*

When they started working with child soldiers, ADEPE found among them were adolescent girls who had been recruited into the war. They provided support to those girls helping them to reintegrate back into their communities. As ADEPE expanded its work, their focus turned predominantly to responding to the needs of women and adolescent girls, who had been affected by rape during the war. Most of the women and girls left behind had to rebuild their communities and families but with limited resources and skills. The organization quickly realized that they needed to work towards addressing the root causes that put girls in a vulnerable position rather than only working on mitigating the negative impacts.

*While laws in  
Rwanda promote  
gender equity,  
girls in rural  
communities have  
limited opportunity  
to develop their full  
potential*



Due to poverty and orphan-hood, most of the girls supported by ADEPE did not complete school due to lack of resources to pay for fees or for school materials. Most of the girls have survived through a patchwork of support from extended family, neighbors, casual labor, begging, or transactional sex.

ADEPE reaches vulnerable young women and girls (ages 15-24) including:

- **Girls who are heads-of-households** because they are orphaned or widowed. Many have responsibility for caring for younger siblings and some are caring for an older, widowed mother.
- Girls engaged in **sex work** as a means of survival.
- Girls who became **mothers** at a young age.

**Which  
Girls?**

## The Model

**The core of ADEPE's program is about empowerment of adolescent girls who did not complete their schooling.**

**Focus of support is about building up:**

### PERSONAL ASSETS

The selection process engages family, community, and government leaders to shed light on the context of the girls' lives. The girls share their challenges, hopes, and dreams. Girls develop a strong self-awareness and close relationships with ADEPE staff.

Throughout the program, girls benefit from ongoing counseling support from ADEPE and volunteers. They learn how to look critically at situations and weigh the consequences of their choices. Ongoing dialogue in their cooperative groups develops their ability to express themselves and negotiate with others. As they learn to assert themselves they are also encouraged to have empathy. All of this helps to build their confidence, self-efficacy, and agency.

### HUMAN ASSETS

ADEPE uses the International Labor Organization Start and Improve Your Business

(SIYB) curriculum to train girls in selecting, establishing, and growing their business ideas. Girls learn the ins and outs of **managing a business**, including marketing, stock control, forecasting cash flow and keeping records.

The girls who select to pursue a specific skill are supported in **vocational training** such as tailoring or hairdressing. Others pursue business opportunities in various lines of retail.

Girls form cooperatives made up of 10-20 girls. They are trained in **cooperative management** so that they can work effectively together as a group.

Girls develop **financial literacy** skills based on a curriculum developed by Population Council. They explore their goals as well as their personal strengths and weaknesses. Girls create a savings plan based on their goals. They contribute to individual and group savings during cooperative meetings. They learn how to budget their money, resolve conflict around money, and talk about money generally.

Girls also learn about their bodies, making smart choices about sex and how to prevent HIV and to prevent pregnancy. ADEPE trains community social workers to facilitate access to **sexual reproductive health services** to the community where girls can access them easily.



## FINANCIAL ASSETS

As girls start off their business, they receive **start-up loans** to fund costs related to starting up a business. ADEPE provides ongoing **technical support** to help them succeed. They benefit from ongoing guidance and mentoring on building up a customer base, selecting the right location, and managing their cash flow.

ADEPE works with local banks to serve girls. Girls use the banks to open up their **savings accounts**, both the group and the individual account. As girls need greater capital, ADEPE facilitates access to **bank loans**.

## PHYSICAL ASSETS

ADEPE understands that girls cannot overcome the challenges of poverty by relying on an income alone. They provide girls with **productive assets**, like sewing machines or hairdressing equipment. They also give them **livestock**, like goats or pigs. The first offspring of the livestock are passed on to another vulnerable girl. Future offspring are owned by girls or can be sold for an income, as needed. Some girls start off with pigs and through buying and selling end up with enough to buy a cow.

The image shows a handwritten ledger titled 'UKUZIGAMA'. The table has the following columns: TARIKI (Date), ABIKUJWE (Amount), ABIKUJWE (Amount), Asigaye mu mibare (Amount), Asigaye mu nyuguti (Description), Umukono w'ubukije (Signature), and Umukono na leshya SACCO (Signature). The entries are as follows:

TARIKI	ABIKUJWE	ABIKUJWE	Asigaye mu mibare	Asigaye mu nyuguti	Umukono w'ubukije	Umukono na leshya SACCO
03/01/14	30000		30000	twite		
04/01/14		15000	15000	gusa		
06/01/14	32000		47000	gusa		
16/01/14	10000		12000	gusa		
21/01/14		10000	2000	gusa		
18/01/14	10000		11000	gusa		
21/01/14		10000	2000	gusa		

ADEPE is well aware that providing the assets is as important as protecting them. They teach girls about their **property and inheritance rights**, help them get birth registration, and connect them to paralegals. If needed, a lawyer from ADEPE will intervene in cases that require appearance in court.

## SOCIAL ASSETS

ADEPE forms girls into cooperatives of 10 - 20 girls. The girls meet twice a month. Within this safe space, they talk about their personal and business **successes and challenges**. They explore topics around **health and family**. They also conduct business, like their **group savings**. The peer network becomes a place of **inspiration and support**, as well as healing and celebration.

**Adult mentors** also provide ongoing guidance, service as role models to encourage girls to succeed and help them solve problems.

## THE CHANGE

ADEPE supported 120 adolescent girls over the course of three years. The program has achieved impressive results. Monitoring data, interviews, and a survey of girls shows that on average, **80% of girls** report that they have:

- power **within** – evidenced by greater self-awareness, greater self-efficacy, positive orientation, voice and leadership.
- power **to act** – the girls have agency and drive, based on clear goals and a sound strategy. Their success is evidenced by a growing income. On average they now earn \$25/week.
- power **to meet** their own basic material needs and support to younger siblings, and other girls. They have houses, better clothes, health insurance, and food. This increase in purchasing power gives them greater bargaining power within intimate partner relationships, within their families, and in their communities.
- power **over** their income and assets. They are making smart decisions about how to use that money: expanding their asset base, buying a goat or a cow, or building up savings at the bank. Girls are accumulating wealth and reinforcing their resilience to overcome financial shocks.
- power **with** – in their safe space the girls help each other when down, and encourage each other to keep going up. They also use their collective voice and leadership to affect change when something is affecting them as a group. They share their personal stories to influence others to believe in and invest in girls. Together they sing and dance to heal, to celebrate and be in solidarity.

The systems of support, skills, knowledge, and confidence they have developed will help to sustain and propel their continued momentum.

