

Association Tuvuge Twiubaka



Association Tuvuge Twiubaka (Tuvuge) was started in 2006 by a group of 12 people working as educators and social workers. The founding members came together to build youth and vulnerable people’s capacity to express themselves after observing, “that many people felt uneasy to defend their rights and to hold dialogues about conflict.” They saw their purpose as to contribute to building sustainable peace in Rwanda. Today, Association Tuvuge Twiubaka, meaning “Let’s Speak to Build Ourselves,” works to empower vulnerable individuals through access to education as well as resources to improve household income and food security. Tuvuge engages community members in respecting children’s and vulnerable people’s rights, and supporting former sex workers, orphans, and families affected by HIV.

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Why Girls?

- In Rwanda, girls **bear the burden of household responsibilities**, like collecting firewood or fetching water
- Girls are **seen as less valuable than boys**. In times of limited resources, girls are **more likely to be pulled out of school**.
- Lack of education affects the **long-term health** of adolescent girls as well as their **economic stability**

“They are now impacting the community because they serve as good examples for other girls on how to improve their own living conditions and thus changing false and common perceptions towards women in society.”

Tuvuge promotes child rights of the vulnerable groups. The genocide had a particular impact on women and girls, who were commonly victims of rape. After the genocide many turned to sex work as a means of earning an income, leading to an increase in cases of HIV. Adolescent girls are especially vulnerable, due to their gender and age.

In response to these challenges, Tuvuge’s top priorities include gender promotion, leadership, rights, and advocacy. Tuvuge hopes that their work will strengthen not only the individual female, but will strengthen the family and better society.

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



Which Girls?

Tuvuge currently works with adolescent girls from:

- **Extremely poor families** that are often impacted by **HIV and violence**. Many of the girls that Tuvuge supports are living with HIV.
- Many of the girls reached by Tuvuge **have not completed school**.
- Young girls orphaned at an early age, some of which have turned to sex work.
- Most live in small **peri-urban areas** and some in **rural communities**.

A defining characteristic of the girls that Tuvuge supports is that they are often the children or siblings of women and girls in their other programs.

- Adolescent girls are referred to Tuvuge by their siblings and mothers, and sometimes their neighbors.
- Tuvuge assesses their situation “objectively, based on their actual needs” in collaboration with local authorities and community members “in order to get accurate information about girls’ specific needs.”

The Model

Tuvuge combines investments in five areas to transform the lives of adolescent girls. Their program focuses on building:

PERSONAL ASSETS

Gender based violence, lack of economic power, reproductive health inequities affect the status of girls in society. In all of their programs, Tuvuge promotes the health and safety rights of girls. Their training and mentoring program help girls to **build their confidence**. They also make sure they have sound knowledge to make informed decisions about their lives, including their **sexual and reproductive health**. They work closely with local clinics, identifying individuals who can provide **girl-friendly support** when the girls go to the local clinic. They also facilitate community dialogues to raise awareness of gender issues.

HUMAN ASSETS

Tuvuge provides skills training so that girls have a means to earn a steady income. From the start, they empower girls to be part of the decisions that will shape their lives. The girls choose the type of support that they need.

Tuvuge provides skills training in sewing, hairdressing, and livestock rearing.

Girls are taught to be **entrepreneurs** through a program focused on building their business management skills. By empowering them to start their own businesses girls are well positioned to support themselves and their families, thus challenging common perceptions of women in society.

Although they have always encouraged girls to save, they recently strengthened that program by integrating the Population Councils' **financial literacy** program.

The curriculum guides girls through a process of defining their personal goals and financial goals. They also look at their personal characteristics, using the SWOT analysis to inform a plan that is appropriate to individual needs and realities.

Tuvuge also ensures that the young women develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to negotiate for safe sex and access contraceptives that can help them to prevent pregnancy and contracting HIV. They work with local clinics to make the contraceptives available locally so they are accessible to girls.

Girls create a **savings plan** based on their goals. They learn how to budget their money, talk about money and resolve conflict around money.

FINANCIAL ASSETS

Tuvuge complements the training with **technical support**, and access to **micro-loans** to build up their capital. Girls are supported over time, to ensure success. One group of girls, engaged in commodity trading in their local market has gone through three cycles of loans, increasing the size of loan in each cycle. Each time they have paid back their loans within the agreed upon timeframe.

Girls are supported to build up savings. They use the cooperative meetings to contribute **individual and group savings**.

PHYSICAL ASSETS

Tuvuge provides girls with **productive assets**, like sewing machines or hairdressing equipment. They also give them livestock, like goats or pigs. As they bear young, girls pass on first offspring to others and future offspring 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.



SOCIAL ASSETS

Tuvuge also facilitates the formation of girls' cooperatives, which tap the power of the group to build support and increase success. This group model has resulted in a **higher loan repayment** rate, as girls support each other to succeed in their business.

By reaching and supporting these adolescent girls and their mothers and sisters, Tuvuge **breaks the cycle** of deprivation, discrimination, and disempowerment of women and girls, thus changing the trajectory of an entire family.

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



Girls Empowered

THE CHANGE

Tuvuge supported 90 adolescent girls over the course of three years. The program has achieved impressive results. Monitoring data and a survey of girls shows that **80 percent of the girls** supported in this program have:

- power **within** – the girls are more confident about who they are and what they want to achieve in their lives. They now see themselves as capable and as leaders.
- power **to act** – the girls are working hard to make their businesses a success. Using the skills and lessons they've learned, along with ongoing mentoring and guidance, their actions are leading to success with increased incomes.
- power **over** their income and assets – by making strategic decisions about how to use their money. They are using their increasing cash flow to also increase their asset base - by building up savings and buying assets like goats, cows, pigs, which become valuable when unexpected problems arise.
- power **to meet** their own basic material needs – girls are improving their homes, buying better clothes, and eating three meals a day. They are also paying fees to support their siblings in school. With their own income, they feel more independent. This increases their bargaining power within intimate partner relationships, within their families, and in their communities.
- power **with** – in their safe space the girls help each other when down, and encourage each other to keep going up. They also to use their collective voice and leadership to affect change when something is affecting them as a group. 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.

