

Supporting Ingoma Nshya, Women's Initiatives “Gira Ingoma – One Drum Per Girl” programme in advancing the cultural women empowerment in Rwanda

Grantee: Ingoma Nshya, Women's Initiatives

Location: Rwanda, Africa

Grant Cycle: 2025 – 2026

Type of Grant: two-year program support, Human Welfare & Rights

Website: ingomanshya.org

Ingoma Nshya, meaning “New Drum” and “New Power” in Kinyarwanda, is a Rwandan non-government organization founded in 2004 by Odile Gakire Katese. Dedicated to promoting and advancing women's roles in the cultural and creative industries, the organization formed Rwanda's first all-female drumming troupe, challenging long-standing cultural taboos that prohibited women from drumming. The initiative extends beyond music, serving as a catalyst for community transformation: it has become a powerful symbol of healing and women's empowerment in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, fostering social cohesion by bringing together relatives of both survivors and perpetrators.

The “I Have A Drum” programme exemplifies Ingoma Nshya's innovative and holistic approach to cultural empowerment. Through creative residencies, global tours, documentaries, publications, and advocacy campaigns, the program amplifies the voices and visibility of women drummers in both local and international contexts. In addition, Ingoma Nshya organizes the quarterly Ingoma Nshya Festival, a pioneering event that celebrates and promotes female drummers while helping to secure their rightful place in the national and international artistic landscape.

In Rwanda, women and girls have seen significant progress across various sectors of society over

the past few decades. Since the 1994 genocide, the Rwandan government has prioritized gender equality, resulting in notable achievements such as legal reforms to protect women's rights and one of the highest female parliamentary representation in the world, exceeding 60%. Education for girls has improved substantially through policies aimed at boosting enrollment; however, dropout rates remain disproportionately high among girls, driven by poverty, early marriage, and persistent cultural norms.

Economically, women have benefited from programs promoting entrepreneurship and increased participation in the workforce. Yet, disparities persist, particularly in rural areas, where access to resources, education, and economic opportunities remains limited. Despite progress in legal and policy frameworks, traditional gender roles continue to shape the lived experiences of many women and girls, underscoring the need for continued investment in cultural change, social support, and inclusive development.

Ingoma Nshya's programme “Gira Ingoma - One Drum Per Girl,” supported by the **Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation** (NaEPF), is dedicated to empowering girls and young women in Rwanda's Huye and Gisagara Districts through access to musical education in traditional Rwandan

percussion, a cultural practice historically reserved for boys. The initiative promotes gender equity in the arts by challenging deeply rooted stereotypes and advocating for a gender-responsive National Curriculum Framework in Music, Dance, and Drama. By confronting the social norms that limit girls' participation in non-traditional roles within the creative and cultural industries, the program opens new pathways for inclusion. Currently, over 500 girls have received training in areas where female presence has been minimal or nonexistent, including drumming, warrior dance, poetry, singing, and juggling.

By breaking the long-standing Rwandan tradition that prohibited women from drumming, Ingoma Nshya is reshaping societal perceptions and pioneering a new cultural narrative, one that champions gender equality and redefines the role of women in Rwanda.