**Stronger women, stronger societies**

Every woman has dreams, some as simple as to put her children through school, to start her own business, to have her voice heard and her vote counted. Every woman can also be a catalyst for positive change in her community and country. We support Women for Women International’s initiative to provide 3,000 women survivors of war, civil strife and other conflicts with the knowledge, skills and resources to move from crisis and poverty to stability and self-sufficiency. The comprehensive 12-month programme developed by Women for Women International helps advance women’s entrepreneurship, promotes their financial inclusion, increases their access to health services and engages men to support women’s equality.

**DURATION:** 2013-2017  
**CHALLENGE:** Women’s social and economic development  
**COUNTRIES:** Afghanistan, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Sudan  
**PARTNER:** Women for Women International

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**CONTEXT**

Women are catalysts for positive change in their families, communities and countries. Investing in women, particularly those who have been marginalized, contributes to reducing poverty. Greater gender equality enhances economic productivity and improves development outcomes for the next generation. Women are also powerful advocates for peace. Even in the midst of personal tragedy, they demonstrate incredible strength and resilience. Women for Women International works in conflict and post-conflict areas, to enable women to transform their lives and thrive. The organisation focuses on socially-excluded women in particular, including war survivors, widows, returned refugees, internally displaced persons, single heads of household and those whose lives have been shattered by conflict through the loss of family, loss of property, displacement, violence, torture or rape.
ACTION

We support a 3-year programme that provides 3,000 marginalized women in 5 conflict-affected countries (Afghanistan, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Sudan) with the knowledge, skills and resources to move from crisis and poverty to stability and self-sufficiency.

The 12-month comprehensive programme developed by Women for Women International advances women’s entrepreneurship, promotes their financial inclusion, increases their access to health services and engages men to support women’s equality.

Women who enrol learn job skills and receive business training so they can earn a living. They gain access to income-generating activities in which they can apply these skills and begin moving towards financial stability. They come to understand their rights and how to fight for those rights in their homes, their communities and their nations. They learn how to become leaders. Specifically, the programme targets 1,000 women annually (200 women per country), to receive:

- **Yearlong training in 4 life skills modules.** Assigned to a group of 25 women, participants meet bi-weekly to learn:
  - **How to sustain an income:** Women learn basic business management skills and a vocational skill with earning power in their local markets. Women are encouraged to begin to save and receive support as they establish cooperatives.
  - **How to be well:** Women learn vital information on health and wellness, including reproductive health, hygiene, nutrition and stress management.
  - **How to become decision-makers:** Women learn their fundamental rights, and those guaranteed in their countries. They also learn the importance of civic participation and voting, as well as critical skills such as negotiation and conflict management.
  - **How to create social networks and safety nets:** Women form close personal bonds with those in their programme class and build strong support networks. They share ideas, resources, and information, and help each other solve problems and build new businesses.

- **18-hour training in business and vocational skills.** The session covers practical business concepts and commercial content, such as market economy, entrepreneurship, planning, selling, bookkeeping and business financing. The sessions emphasize real life experiences and reinforce the idea that savings are an essential tool in poverty reduction. Vocational skills training develops women’s technical and commercial skills targeted at local market opportunities and include agriculture and agro-processing, small business development, tailoring and beauty care. When needed, numeracy training focused on reading numbers, counting and maths are provided.

- **Monthly training stipend:** Participants in the 12-month empowerment programme each receive US$10 a month to cover basic family needs, such as medicine and school tuition, which provides a safety net.
Additionally, we also support income generation activities at the Rwanda Women’s Opportunity Center. Launched in June 2013 in Kayonza, this centre is a multi-use facility that already includes a market, retail space, storage, demonstration farm, accommodation and a restaurant. Our support will allow the Opportunity Center to expand its economic and social development training, covering some of the infrastructure and educational needs.

EXPECTED RESULTS
The programme aims to improve the livelihoods and well-being of 3,000 women in the 5 target countries.
Specific objectives are:
- 3,000 women over three years are equipped to act as advocates for themselves and their families (200 women every year in each of the 5 countries)
- 3,000 women over three years are equipped to earn an income to support their individual and family basic needs (200 every year in each of the 5 countries).

LONG-TERM STRATEGY
Women for Women International ensures sustainability through its emphasis on empowering women to achieve social and economic self-sufficiency. Through the innovative training provided, women create their own support networks and acquire links to needed legal, social, psychological and financial resources. The programme is designed to help women build viable, market-driven businesses that generate sustainable income for them and their families. In addition, Women for Women International focuses on building local capacity and knowledge for long-term sustainability.