



INDIGENOUS WOMEN FOR HEALTH AND EQUALITY

"IWHE-ONG"

Standing Upright: From Vulnerability to Sovereignty"

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030



PREFACE BY THE PRESIDENT OF IWHE-ONG

The heart of this Strategic Plan 2026-2030 is sovereign empowerment. We strongly believe that the ability of Indigenous women to identify and develop their own priorities in the areas of health, education, climate justice and security is the indispensable driver of true human development.

For the next five years, the strategic orientation of IWHE-ONG is crystallized around the SIMAMA (Standing Up) Approach, an integrated transformation trajectory based on the DAT triptych: Dignity, Autonomy and Earth. As the inspiring thought so aptly reminds us: "As soon as a person understands that it is contrary to his dignity as a man to obey unjust laws, no tyranny can enslave him."

Our ambition is to move every Indigenous woman from vulnerability to sovereign actor status through three major commitments:

- **Dignity** : Restore physical and psychological integrity through the "Resilience Passport", because no economic success can be built on untreated trauma.
- **Autonomy**: Boost financial independence through "Sovereign Capital", transforming savings into sustainable collective investments.
- The **Earth** : Securing the future through the "Green Charter", guaranteeing climate justice and ecological governance where women protect and enhance their land heritage.

While we carry out this mission, the strengthening of our management systems at the Executive Management level remains at the center of our actions. We are committed to promoting exemplary accountability to our partners and stakeholders, rooted in transparency, love, dignity and helpfulness.

This process will be rigorously led by the Executive Management of IWHE-ONG, under the strategic advice and guidance of the Board of Directors, so that by 2030, every indigenous woman can finally look to the future with hope.

Mrs. NYOTA MATATA Stella
President of IWHE-NGO

INTRODUCTION BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF IWHE-ONG

This Strategic Plan 2026-2030 is the roadmap of Indigenous Women for Health and Equality (IWHE-ONG) to achieve its mission in the short, medium and long term. The result of a rigorous analysis of our internal and external contexts, this document projects our ambition to build a world where Indigenous women look to the future with hope.

At the heart of our approach is the SIMAMA Theory of Change ("Standing Up"). This integrated transformation process aims to move indigenous women from a status of vulnerability to that of sovereign actors of their development and resilience. To achieve this, we have structured our actions around three fundamental and interconnected pillars: Dignity, Autonomy and Earth (DAT).

This strategic management document defines our general and specific objectives, as well as the framework for acquiring and allocating the resources necessary to achieve them. Informed by the priorities of sustainable development in the Democratic Republic of Congo, IWHE-ONG has become aware that the effectiveness of its interventions depends on a continuous improvement of planning, coordination and the Monitoring-Evaluation-Accountability-Learning (SERA) cycle.

As a reference document, this plan provides an overview of the positioning of IWHE-ONG and facilitates a common understanding of our contribution to the national development process. It describes our current situation, history, organization, achievements, strengths and opportunities, while outlining the strategic orientations carried out by our Transformation Contracts: the Resilience Passport, the Sovereign Capital and the Green Charter.

The implementation of this plan, supported by a robust monitoring and evaluation system, will allow us to measure our performance in real time. This will support the identification of good practices and the integration of lessons learned, ensuring that our future policies and programs remain true to the deep needs of the Indigenous communities we serve.

Mrs. Doctor ALENGE MYAMBANO Esther
Executive Director of IWHE-ONG

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I. WHO WE ARE

I.1. OUR IDENTITY

Indigenous Women for Health and Equality (IWHE-ONG) is an independent, non-profit, non-political organization founded in 2020 by a committed collective of Indigenous women and girls. Born out of a desire to break the cycle of marginalization, the organization fights against the lack of empowerment and gender inequalities suffered by indigenous peoples at the local and national levels.

The organization focuses its interventions in the province of South Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with a particularly active presence in the territories of Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga. These areas were strategically chosen because of their high concentration of indigenous peoples, allowing for local action as close as possible to the realities on the ground.

Since its creation, IWHE-ONG has rejected any religious, ethnic or tribal affiliation to devote itself to its vision: to build a world where indigenous women look to the future with hope. This ambition is now being realized through the SIMAMA ("Standing Up") Approach, a global strategy that transforms beneficiaries from vulnerability to sovereignty.

I.2. VISION

To build a world where Indigenous women look to the future with hope.

I.3. MISSION

To guide, accompany and mentor Indigenous women in their struggle for women's well-being and social self-determination.

I.4. VALUES

IWHE-ONG believes deeply in "SRAC":

- **SERVICE** : Every day, we seek to be useful in promoting the well-being of children;
- **RESPONSIBILITY**: As the guarantor of our actions, we are accountable for our interventions to all stakeholders;
- **LOVE** : Whatever the circumstances, we put ourselves in each other's shoes to make our decisions.
- **CONFIDENCE**: The promotion of self-esteem is at the center of our interventions.

I.5. OUR MODE OF INTERVENTION

Indigenous Women for Health and Equality (IWHE-ONG) defines itself as an operational implementing organization, focusing on direct and outreach to Indigenous women and girls. Our strength lies in our status as a grassroots organization, anchored in the local realities of the territories of Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga.

1. Overall objective of IWHE-ONG

Contribute to the achievement of effective gender equality and empower Indigenous women and girls.

2. Specific objectives

- Promote the maternal, child, sexual, reproductive, mental and nutritional health of indigenous women living in our areas of intervention;
- Promote the rights and human dignity of indigenous women through female leadership, the fight against gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive rights;
- Promote the economic empowerment of indigenous women through women's entrepreneurship and the protection of biodiversity in their living environments.

I.6. OUR PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

1. Funding and Technical Support Partners

We collaborate with international and national organizations that support our Dignity, Autonomy and Earth (DAT) pillars :

- *Congolese Women's Fund (FFC)*: Historical partner for women's empowerment and rights.
- *International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)*: Crucial support for the Mobile Clinical Model and trauma management.
- *Digital Defenders Partnership & Global Focus* : Supporting the protection and security of human rights defenders.
- *Cameras Without Borders* : Partner for the documentation and visibility of Indigenous realities.
- *Global Fund Advocate Network (GFAN)*: Advocating for access to essential health care.

2. Strategic Networks and Alliances

IWHE-ONG strengthens its advocacy through active participation in governance and advocacy platforms:

- *Member of the GBV (Gender-Based Violence) Network* : Coordination of the response to violence against women.
- *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)*: Alignment of our PEMA model with global standards of climate justice.
- *People Powered* : Commitment to participatory democracy and community leadership.

3. Community and Local Partners

- *Grassroots groups and women's associations* : Targets and first actors of the SIMAMA approach through the AVECI groups.
- *Natural Resource Management Committees (NMRCs)*: Key partners for the implementation of the Green Charter and land advocacy.

4. Public Institutions and the Private Sector

- *Government and State Services* : Collaboration with the provincial divisions of health, gender and environment for the sustainability of the gains.
- *Private companies and the Congolese Diaspora* : Mobilization of resources and expertise to support the Startup Capital of women entrepreneurs.

I.7. STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF IWHE-ONG IN DR CONGO, EAC AND CEPGL

Advocate and lobby national, regional and international political actors on issues of empowerment of indigenous women and girls in DR Congo in general and the South-South part of South Kivu province.

1.8. OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

IF Indigenous women and girls:

1. Are aware of their rights and have access to national and international legal instruments, and regain their dignity through the **Resilience Passport**, which guarantees them health care, sexual and reproductive education, psychosocial support and legal support, thus restoring their dignity and integrity.
2. Develop professional skills and access modern factors of production through **Sovereign Capital**, which allows them to launch income-generating activities, save, access credit and participate in collective investments, thus strengthening their financial autonomy.
3. **Master climate resilience practices and secure their land** through the **Green Charter**, which trains them in agroecology, engages them in natural resource governance and equips them to defend their land and climate rights.

SO:

- The lack of empowerment of indigenous women and girls and social inequalities will be significantly reduced. They will be equipped in terms of motivation, purchasing power and leadership to promote their rights and those of their communities.
- **The changes will take place on several levels:**
 - **Behavioral:** women will gain confidence, decide on their economic future and become actors of ecological and social change.
 - **Procedural:** Communities will adopt inclusive rules, incorporate sustainable practices, and recognize the central role of women in development.
 - **Systemic:** discrimination based on gender and origin will decrease; access to land, justice and resources will be more equitable; public policies will integrate the voice and solutions of indigenous women.

BECAUSE:

- Members of all communities will understand the need to end all forms of discrimination against Indigenous women and girls, and the need to treat women better in general so that the world becomes a better place for all.
- SIMAMA Transformation Contracts (Resilience Passport, Sovereign Capital, Green Charter) offer an integrated, sequential and measurable pathway, which transforms vulnerability into sovereignty, and ensures that empowerment is sustainable, rooted in dignity, the economy and the land.

II. PROGRAMMATIC PILLARS

The priority area of intervention of IWHE-ONG is the sovereign empowerment of indigenous women and girls. For the period 2026-2030, our action is based on the philosophy of "holistic strengthening through integrated interventions", embodied in the SIMAMA ("Standing Up") approach.

2.1. Our Targets and Agents of Transformation

We work as closely as possible to the realities on the ground with:

- *Direct beneficiaries* : Women and girls from the indigenous peoples of South Kivu.
- *Changemakers* : Innovative women advocates, local change agents, women's and youth forums, as well as grassroots community structures (AVECI groups).

2.2. The three strategic axes (DAT)

Our interventions are structured around the DAT triptych, where each axis corresponds to a specific transformation contract:

- **DIGNITY axis: Human Rights and Restoration. Focus :** Fight against GBV, mental health, reproductive health, access to civil rights and protection of women defenders. It is a question of restoring the integrity of women so that they can project themselves into the future.
- **AUTONOMY axis: economic empowerment. Focus :** Women's entrepreneurship, savings, credit and productive investment. This axis transforms women's financial capacity into a decision-making lever within the community.
- **EARTH Axis: Climate Justice and Holistic Health. Focus :** Access to land, agroecology, green agribusiness, nutritional security and sexual and reproductive health rights. This axis guarantees the sustainability of the achievements through the control of the environment and natural resources.

2.3. The 9 operational components

To operationalize these axes, IWHE-ONG structures its actions in 9 complementary components :

- Mobile Clinics and Mental Health (Recovery of War Victims and GBV).
- Sexual and Reproductive Rights (Education and Access to Care).
- Urgence : Aide Humanitaire & Support Nutritionnel
- Leadership and Political Participation (Women's and Youth Forums).
- Savings-Credit-Investment (AVECI) (Start-up capital and cooperatives).
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation (Indigenous Micro-enterprises).
- Nutritional Security (Care Practices and Hygiene).
- Climate Justice and Agroecology (Green Charter).
- Land and Environmental Advocacy (Resource Governance).

II.1. DIGNITY



II.1.1. Issue:

The Dignity Divide for Aboriginal Women

Indigenous women and girls in South Kivu, particularly in the territories of Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga, are now in a state of deep identity withdrawal and chronic trauma.

This central problem is reflected in visible attitudes of renunciation of care, a lack of interest in development opportunities and a generalized mistrust of any institutional structure. These women live in an apparent "social death", where physical and psychological pain has become a daily norm, annihilating any ability to project oneself into the future.

These behavioural consequences are caused by devastating immediate causes: permanent and untreated exposure to Gender-Based Violence (GBV), trauma related to armed conflict and extreme health insecurity. Indigenous women are not only victims of assault; She is trapped in a cycle of suffering where the lack of specialized medical, nutritional, psychological, and legal care turns every wound into an indelible scar that blocks her resilience.

At the root of these causes is a major procedural failure: the lack of holistic care protocols and local monitoring mechanisms (such as mobile clinics) adapted to the cultural, financial and geographical realities of isolated areas. Conventional health services are physically inaccessible and financially prohibitive, creating a break in the chain of care. These sources stem directly from a systemic origin: a system of national governance that historically invisibilizes Indigenous peoples. This structural exclusion from public health and social protection policies deprives these women of their status as full citizens, relegating them to the periphery of state priorities.

The justification for our intervention is urgent: if nothing is done in the near future, the interventions of the actors of change will face total operational inefficiency. Any attempt at economic empowerment or climate justice will be sterile, because financial or land sovereignty cannot be built on broken and traumatized human capital. The resources invested will be lost in a cycle of dependency and recurrent vulnerability.

In the longer term, the systemic consequences will be irreversible: without obtaining a "Resilience Passport", we will witness a definitive dehumanization of Indigenous women in particular, of all vulnerable women in general, and an intergenerational transmission of trauma. The distant future will see the extinction of indigenous female leadership, locking these communities in a vicious cycle of perpetual servitude and permanent exclusion from the national development process.

II.1.2. Objective to be achieved

By 2030, ensure that 90% of indigenous women who are victims of GBV or in a situation of health insecurity in the areas where programmes intervene, validate their "Dignity Transformation Contract" by obtaining the Resilience Passport. This validation requires not only the completion of 80% of the medical and psychological care protocol, but above all the maintenance of a psychosocial well-being index $\geq 7/10$ for 3 consecutive months, thus certifying their full mental and physical capacity to integrate the cycle of economic empowerment (AVECI).

A restored basis of human dignity, a prerequisite for any economic activity.

II.1.3. Programmatic Components

- Mobile Clinics and Mental Health : Rapid response unit for the medical and holistic recovery of victims of war, torture and GBV. This component guarantees "healing before action".
- Sexual and Reproductive Rights (SRR): Education, awareness and access to reproductive health care for women and girls, aimed at reclaiming the body and health.
- Urgence : Aide Humanitaire & Support Nutritionnel : Les besoins nutritionnels de base des femmes en cure de restauration (MCM) sont couverts pour garantir l'efficacité des protocoles médicaux et psychologiques.

II.2. AUTONOMY



II.2.1. Issue :

Lock of Economic Dependence and Financial Invisibility

Indigenous women in South Kivu are in a situation of great economic fragility, where every daily gesture is dictated by the urgency of survival rather than by the choice of the future ;

This situation is characterized by an almost total dependence on emergency humanitarian aid and underpaid daily work. This problem manifests itself in a chronic inability to save, a lack of entrepreneurial initiative and a crippling fear of debt, immobilizing these women in a cycle of poverty where they are only executors and never decision-makers.

These behavioural consequences are caused by critical proximate causes: the total absence of start-up capital and the systematic exclusion from traditional microfinance circuits. The indigenous woman comes up against a financial wall as soon as she wants to start a business, due to a lack of credibility in the eyes of local banks. At the root of these causes is a major breakdown: the lack of revolving credit mechanisms adapted to indigenous lifestyles and the absence of a local financial support system capable of transforming a small subsidy into a productive investment.

These shortcomings are rooted in a deeply exclusive and discriminatory national financial system. Economic structures in DR Congo do not recognize the specificities of indigenous peoples and ignore their solvency potential based on community solidarity rather than land heritage. This systemic invisibility prevents any accumulation of capital and keeps women in structural economic marginalization.

The justification for our action is imperative: if nothing is done in the near future, the actors of change will see the operational collapse of the Dignity pillar. Without financial autonomy, women restored by dignity programs will inevitably fall back into precariousness, making them vulnerable again to abuse and GBV out of simple economic necessity. The human investment made by those involved in the restoration of human dignity will thus be obsolete due to the lack of empowerment interventions.

In the longer term, the systemic consequences will be disastrous: the failure to build a sovereign capital condemns indigenous communities to remain "spectators of the local economy". This ensured the perpetuation of an asymmetrical development model where the wealth of the territories of Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga is exploited without indigenous women and girls having any bargaining power, making the efforts of the actors of change manifestly obsolete.

II.2.2. Objective to be achieved

By the end of 2030, ensure that 100% of the winners of the Resilience Passport have access to 'Sovereign Capital' through the granting of a USD 100 seed investment fund, while guaranteeing a 95% transformation rate of these funds into sustainable income-generating activities (IGAs). Performance will be measured by a constant repayment rate $\geq 95\%$ over 12 months and the obligation for each beneficiary to build up growth savings equivalent to at least 20% of its initial capital, thus marking its transition from the status of debtor to that of independent investor within the collective.

Acquisition of Sovereign Capital and end of external dependence.

II.2.3. Programmatic Components

- Savings-Credit-Investment : Structuring of the basic groups into savings and investment cooperatives. This component manages the granting of "Sovereign Capital" to break financial dependence.
- Entrepreneurship and Indigenous Innovation : Technical support for the creation and management of micro-enterprises and income-generating activities (IGAs) promoting local know-how and products.
- Leadership and Citizen Participation : Facilitation of women's and youth forums to strengthen their advocacy capacity, self-confidence and participation in political and community decision-making bodies.

II.3. EARTH



II.3.1. Issue :

Land dispossession and climate insecurity

The indigenous communities of the territories of Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga are now exhibiting a pattern of exploitation for survival and forced migration, characterized by the use of extractive agricultural practices (deforestation, slash-and-burn agriculture) and the gradual abandonment of ancestral lands.

This problem translates into resignation in the face of land degradation and a total withdrawal from local decision-making spaces, leaving indigenous women in the position of powerless spectators in the face of the destruction of their vital ecosystem.

These above-mentioned situations are caused by: extreme vulnerability to climate shocks (prolonged droughts, floods) and increasing land dispossession. Without secure titles or coping techniques, Indigenous women see their crops perish and their land grabbed, which breaks their spiritual and nurturing connection to nature. At the root of these causes is a major breakdown: the absence of community-based ecological management mechanisms and the lack of consultation frameworks that would formalize women's land rights and codify agroecological practices.

This deficiency stems from a centralized and exclusive environmental governance system in Congo. Land law enforcement and national climate policies undervalue indigenous ancestral knowledge and fail to recognize women as legitimate resource managers. This systemic exclusion allows for the uncontrolled exploitation of land to the detriment of biodiversity and the rights of local communities.

If nothing is done in the near future, the pillars (Dignity and Autonomy) will fail. Without secure and resilient land, financial autonomy will collapse in the first major climate shock, and restored dignity will again be trampled on by food insecurity and land conflicts. Investment in women's entrepreneurship will remain superficial if it is not rooted in sustainable resource management.

In the longer term, the systemic consequences will be the eradication of Indigenous culture and the definitive rural exodus to urban centres. Without the implementation of

climate justice and land sovereignty, indigenous territories will become ecological deserts and lawless zones, making any form of sustainable sovereignty structurally impossible.

II.3.2. Objective to be achieved

By the end of 2030, institutionalize the 'Green Charter' as a governance foundation in all partner communities in South Kivu, ensuring that 70% of the autonomy groups validate their 'Transformation Contract for the Earth'. This commitment requires the simultaneous implementation of three resilience agroecological practices (agroforestry, water management and seed storage) and the active participation of these women in local decision-making bodies, thus ensuring land and climate sovereignty capable of sustainably protecting the economic gains and dignity of indigenous peoples.

Climate justice and land sovereignty

II.3.3. Programmatic Components

- Nutritional Sovereignty and Holistic Health Sentinel : This component ensures the physical vigor of Indigenous families through the promotion of local care practices, hygiene and healthy diets. It integrates an innovative dimension of digital nutrition through the Photovoice approach: women use photography to document, analyze and communicate on their nutritional realities, the state of their crops and the barriers to quality food. This approach transforms visual data into advocacy tools to influence local food security policies and value ancestral knowledge related to nutritious plants.
- Climate Justice and Agroecology : Implementation of resilience techniques (agroforestry, water management, local seeds) to adapt indigenous agriculture to climate change.
- Land Advocacy and Resource Governance : Legal and political actions to secure women's access to land and their active participation in the sustainable management of the natural resources of their territories.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL PILLAR

III.1. GOVERNANCE, EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

III.1.1. Institutional Performance Objectives

Transform administrative efficiency into sustainable community impact through:

- Optimization and Standardization : Ensure the integrated coordination of IWHE-ONG by maintaining management systems (programmatic, administrative, financial and logistical) that are efficient, audited and comply with international standards, thus strengthening the confidence of our technical and financial partners.
- Strengthening the SERA (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) System : Moving from data management to impact-based management. The aim is to optimize the use of the SERA system to measure the SIMAMA Completeness Rate in real time and to adjust our interventions for maximum efficiency.
- Resource Mobilization Engineering : Develop a proactive strategy for mobilizing diversified funds and resources (human, technical and material) to support the ambition of the new five-year plan.

III.2. PROVISIONAL BUDGET 2026-2030

IWHE-ONG has demonstrated rigorous management capacity and transparency as evidenced by its successive audit reports, validated by an external auditor.

- Budget Retrospective (2021-2025): During the previous cycle, IWHE-ONG successfully managed a projected budget of US\$674,238.13 (Six hundred and seventy-four thousand two hundred and thirty-eight US dollars and thirteen cents). Compared to the total budget forecast of US\$674,238.13 established for the last five years, the effective mobilization rate is 45.32%. This financial volume has made it possible to establish the legitimacy of the organization in the territories of Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga and to stabilize our management systems.
- Budget Vision 2026-2030: For the next five years, the organization plans to increase its budget to achieve all of our SMART objectives related to the SIMAMA approach. Based on our historic growth and the expansion of our programs, the estimated budget for this new five-year term is increased to \$1,146,200.00 USD (One million one hundred and forty-six thousand two hundred US dollars).

This growth will be supported by a diversified resource mobilization strategy and transparent governance rooted in our values of love and helpfulness, ensuring that every resource mobilized directly serves the recovery and sovereignty of Indigenous women.