Measuring Impact:

Village Savings & Loan Associations and the well-being of survivors of sexual violence in eastern DRC
Conflict within an existing culture of gender inequality

Pervasive sexual violence

Consequences

- Social rejection and stigma
- Mental health problems
- Lack of access to income

Democratic Republic of the Congo
What is the impact of selected interventions on the psychological, social, and economic well-being of survivors of sexual violence?

- A socio-economic intervention
- A mental health intervention
What are Village Savings & Loan Associations?
VSLA groups can help members access financial resources.

Village Savings & Loan Associations (VSLA)
Randomized Controlled Trial

Intervention
- 159 women
- 36 VSLAs

Wait-Control
- 142 women
- 39 VSLAs

Timeline

Qualitative & Pilot

VSLA Cycle
- Mar 2011 – Apr 2012

Follow-Up 1

Follow-Up 2
- 6 months

Baseline
What did participants say?

“They took me as a sister and a friend”

-VSLA member, Uvira
Before participating in the group, women didn’t speak in their households.

But since we became VSLA members, our husbands consider our opinions.

VSLA Member, Walungu
What has changed in your life due to VSLA?
94% completed

$49,427 shared out

43% interest (8%-86%)

VSLA Results
How often do you feel hopeless about the future?

- 0: Hata kamwe, Pas du tout, Not at all
- 1: Kidogo, Un peu, A little bit
- 2: Kiasi ya Kadiri, Un niveau moyen, A moderate amount
- 3: Mingi, Beaucoup, A lot

Psychological Functioning
Significant improvement in mental health after VSLA for sexual violence survivors

Average score for 55 trauma symptoms

Subscales
- Depression*
- Anxiety*
- PTSD
- Local*

![Graph showing average mental health symptom score over baseline and follow-up]

* p<0.05
Social resources are significantly improved for VSLA participants compared to wait-control.

- **Social Coping**
- **Community Functioning**
- **Family Functioning**

### Graph

- **Baseline**
- **Follow-Up**
- **6 months**

**Number of people available to help**

**VSLA**

**Wait-Control**
Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Adapting VSLA methodology
- Security
- Level of education
- Expectations
What does this mean?

- VSLA for sexual violence survivors
- Sustainable
- Post-conflict settings
- Pair with other interventions? – EA$E
VSLAs not only increase access to financial resources, but also improve mental health for female survivors of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.