

## Trailblazers for Change: Women's Collective Action

Kirindimura Tuhwerane women's group in Kasagama Subcounty, Lyantonde District was previously plagued by a scarcity of funds, a consequence of poor financial decisions. The group members solely relied on meagre weekly savings and small-interest loans amongst themselves which were rather insufficient to sustain them. They were stuck in a rut, with a constant cycle of poverty and hopelessness.

There is anecdotal evidence that demonstrates strong linkages between women's poverty and their inability to effectively participate in development processes. Poverty often exacerbates a sense of helplessness, prompting women to withdraw into apathy due to low self-esteem. To address this, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) has initiated programs aimed at equipping women's groups with skills, particularly in income-generating activities, to catapult them into leadership. Kirindimura Tuhwerane group is one of such groups.

The group members were trained by seasoned entrepreneurs in various income-generating activities, including making handcrafts like baskets and mats. This has empowered them to diversify their sources of income, creating a spike in their savings and loan scheme. Additionally, they have encouraged members who may not necessarily have skills in crafting to explore other income-generating ventures such as piggery or poultry farming, ensuring that every member has an opportunity to contribute to the group's savings.

The skilling not only improved their lives financially, but also unlocked their leadership potential.

*"It has opened our eyes to know that even us, as women we can become leaders. We have given support to fellow women who contest in elections at different levels of leadership."*

The confidence of the group members has grown and together, they are a force to be reckoned with. Tapping into their newly acquired confidence, they have garnered support from fellow women, many of whom now seek their guidance as they navigate leadership roles at various levels of governance.



Members of the Kirindimura Tuhwerane Group showcasing the handcrafts that they made during their skilling sessions.

Recognizing the pivotal role of resources in empowerment, FOWODE will continue to place emphasis on women's socio-economic empowerment as a means of promoting their active participation in strategic economic policy issues and decision-making processes.