



The importance of Stand Speak Rise Up! support to survivors

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Respect, love and consideration save lives. In 2004, my life was dark, with my world collapsing around me. I refused to be treated, but the pain was intense, and neither alcohol nor drugs could soothe it.

When I first met Dr Denis Mukwege, I had forgotten in my pain and dismay that there were still humans on this earth who retain their dignity and sacrifice themselves for others. How can one man repair what other men have so cruelly destroyed? In 2018, our struggle and our pain are recognised by the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize. Finally, our voices are heard, but to what extent? Are we not just extras brought to forums, but without any real consideration?

When I arrived in Luxembourg in 2019, I did not any longer believe in the fight nor in the possibility of change. But when I arrived and met the Grand Duchess and saw her embracing the ladies, tears streamed down my face. Can a person of her rank be so sociable and committed? It was the beginning of a great adventure and a change in my perception of myself. The Grand Duchess said in one of her speeches: "the forum today is not a culmination, it is a great page that opens in the fight against sexual violence". **These were not just words, the survivors were at the heart of this conference, they were present not as spectators but as experts.**

Today we are able to see progress in our country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, as a result of the determination we were able to draw from Stand Speak Rise Up! This forum made many of my sisters dream and today we are fighting to achieve these dreams. The forum addressed several concerns of survivors: consideration, respect and inclusion at all levels. **Respect creates confidence and strength.**

A few months after the forum, the world was shaken by the pandemic, the hope of resisting this other scourge was tiny. Stand Speak Rise Up! came to us to help survivors in need, and prevention materials were distributed to families and a hospital in Kavumu. Then 40 women in my village started farming with livestock. In South Kivu, women have contributed to the country's economy through agriculture, which has supported more than 100 other families through the Mutuelles des Solidarités backed by Stand Speak Rise Up! This project has strengthened these women's commitment to development. **Love, respect and consideration have helped hundreds of people to stand up, fight back and become agents of change.** Thank you to all those who contribute directly to this life-saving work.

« *This forum made many of my sisters dream* »