

March 2026

Sustained by Grace: The Women of HEAL Africa Rise Again

This past week we celebrated International Women's Day in Goma. Around the world this day honors women and imagines a better future for girls everywhere, but here in eastern Congo it carries an even deeper meaning. It reflects the strength of women who hold families and communities together in the midst of profound poverty and conflict.

At HEAL Africa, this celebration is always a cherished moment of unity and gratitude. Last year, the women were unable to gather because of the insecurity that followed the takeover of the city. This year, despite the ongoing conflict, we wanted to bless the now 245 women in the HEAL Africa community, many of whom are widowed, unemployed, and caring for children they have taken in.

Thanks to the generous support of our friends in the United States, this year's celebration was filled with joy. Each woman received cloth for a new dress, and together we lifted our voices in prayer, song, and testimonies, ending the day with a meal of fellowship.

The women asked us to convey their gratitude to churches and friends in the U.S. as they shared some of the hardships of this past year. As always, listening to their stories was humbling. Below are a few of their testimonies (names changed):



Amina: *"I was married as a young girl to an older man—a lawyer—and I never had the chance to learn to read. I always longed for that opportunity. Now, as a widow, I have begun taking literacy classes at HEAL Africa at 65 years of age. I can now read my Bible, and I am so proud and so thankful!"*

Colette: *"HEAL Africa has made such a difference in my life. God is good, and we are beautiful in His eyes. I carried many inner wounds—sickness and discouragement—over this past year. I had lost all hope until I came to HEAL Africa's Women's Program. The church became my place of healing. Please send my greetings to the women and the churches in the United States. Tell them thank you for standing with us."*

Thérèse: *“The pool of Bethesda... that is what HEAL Africa has been for me and many others. I have learned that prayer is the beginning of everything. I was a seamstress without a machine, sewing dresses by hand to sell. Through the rotating credit program (Savings and Loan) I was finally able to buy a sewing machine. Now I sew, I sell my clothes, and I can feed my children.”*

Zawadi: *“My life carries many wounds. I had eleven children, but only three are still living. My daughter married and had five children, and then her husband abandoned her. Please ask the churches to keep praying for us.”*

Aline: *“Through AVEC (Women’s Savings and Loan Program) I was able to start a small business selling tomatoes. My children are in school now, and this trading has truly blessed my life. You may feel alone at times, but we stand together as the Femmes de Valeur. We have all faced many hardships. Many other groups can no longer meet because of the conflict, but we still come together. No one comes without being changed.”*

Sifa: *“I am a widow with children. My brother gave me five dollars to begin a small business. I started by selling bananas in the Kituku market, and through the HEAL Africa Livelihood Women’s Program I learned how to do commerce. Later, I received seeds from the church in the United States. I planted lettuce, harvested my crop, and sold it for fifty dollars—enough to send one of my children to school. We begin with something small, like a single lettuce seed... but it can grow.”*

Esther: *“I too received seeds from Maman Ann and planted cabbages, and my children were able to eat.” As she showed a photo of her garden and the cabbages flourishing...she said, “this picture is my testimony.”*

These stories bear witness to the truth that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” Through your prayers and generosity, the women of our church have experienced that light in tangible ways. Thank you for standing with them and for sharing in the work of His Kingdom here in Goma.

*This is what the Lord has done for me... he looked favorably on me and took away my disgrace.
Luke 1:25*



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