



*The culture we want
For the woman we want*



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



Gakire Katese O
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**Ensuring that the course of creative arts
in Rwandan primary and secondary schools
is gender responsive**

Culture, as it exists today, was made by men in the absence of women, who found themselves shackled to numerous traditions, customs, perceptions, beliefs that even today demean them and jeopardize their full empowerment. For the **Woman Cultural Centre** and **Ingoma Nshya, Women's Initiatives**, culture is “**made of**”: made of the people it represents: me, you, us, Rwanda; and made of values it stands for: equality, justice, inclusion, unity, peace... The Rwanda's national gender policy comes as a unique and precious asset that pulverizes taboos, lifts prohibitions, and opens the door to a new era of **possibilities, precedents** and **premieres**. An evolution in line with the changes of Rwandan society regarding women empowerment.

Therefore, “**Gira Ingoma – One Drum Per Girl**” comes as a corrective and positive action in the creative and cultural industries where discrimination against girls and women in fact continues to exist (drumming, warrior dance and poetry, songwriting...). **Gira Ingoma** aims to contribute to align culture to the national gender policy by making it “**woman-friendly**”. Today, **Gira Ingoma** has grown into a large network of girls, trainers, teachers, directors, parents... that is actively ensuring that the course of creative arts is **gender responsive**. Because, it's always all about education: culture is education and equality is education.

And the task is titanic: to correct deeply buried cultural inequalities; to advance equity for half of the population right down to the rumbling of drums, the steps of warrior dances, the lyrics of traditional songs, the words of secular proverbs – all previously the territory of men, all now increasingly occupied by Rwandan women and girls. Thanks to **Ingoma Nshya**, our privileged partner, a new paradigm of female leadership is emerging and although barriers still exist, some headway are made and the door is open.

This book is also “**made of us**”: “**made of**” the hope of our dream for equality and the transformational power and joy of our drums, “**made of**” the courage and confidence of the warrior dance, now embodied by hundreds of girls and the new vision of our songs and poems, “**made of**” the change we want to see in the arts and culture. It is a precious collection of several photos and excerpts of interviews and speeches that shares the outcomes and knowledge generated by **Gira Ingoma** in 2023.



Gakire Katese
Director
Woman Cultural Centre

This has been a delightful collective journey! My deep gratitude goes first and foremost to my team of **pioneers**: thank you for diligently paving the way for girls and women in culture and for writing history; even if, sometimes, it is with a trembling hand! A huge thanks to the girls who spontaneously took ownership of the project and incarnated with talent and passion all the values it conveys! I am forever grateful to the parents, teachers and directors of schools, and to the local authorities from Huye district for their trust and support.

And last but not least, my deep gratitude goes to **Mobile Arts for Peace**, for having made possible the organization of hundreds of artistic workshops for over 275 girls in eleven schools in Huye and Gisagara districts. They came together for the first time, to launch **Ingoma Nshya Festival**, a quarterly platform that allows them to meet, exchange, network and initiate a much-needed dialogue with different local policymakers and stakeholders on the making of “**The culture we want, for the woman we want**”. Four editions took place as powerful demonstration that **change is possible**.

CULTURE UNDER (RE) CONSTRUCTION: WOMEN AT WORK!



"I have THE drum that, one day, my grand - granddaughter will play.
With pride. With passion. With power."

Gakire Katese O. (Kiki)



"Equality is a **right**,
not a favor."



MADE OF RWANDA
MADE OF EQUALITY

"Equality is a right not a favor. We must challenge ourselves to do even more and better to ensure that the next generations of our daughters and granddaughters inherit a nation where their aspirations have no limits."

**His Excellency Paul Kagame
The President of the Republic of Rwanda
International Women's day 2022**

The culture we want
For the woman we want

Policy Brief



The end of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi on the 4th of July 1994 also marked the end of all forms of division, exclusion, discrimination and injustice in Rwanda.

The Rwandan constitution of 2003, revised in 2015 and 2023, provides equal rights between women and men and imposes a quota of 30% of women in all decision-making organs (Minijust 2023:33-34). The Rwandan government had been deploying an impressive artillery to support gender equality and women empowerment across all sectors, with visible effects particularly in politics where the impressive numbers of women in Cabinet Ministers and the Parliament had positioned Rwanda as **“a global model in promoting gender equality”**.

Consequently, the historic exclusion of Rwandan women from many different artistic and cultural practices that corresponded to their exclusion from political and public life ended with the previous leadership. And with such **an inspiring political model** and **favorable frameworks**, it's high time to ensure that Rwandan culture is on the side of girls and women.

Gender equality in the creative and cultural industries

Regrettably, the creative and cultural industries are far from reflecting the same progress as in the political sphere.

And yet the national culture heritage policy guarantees its commitment to gender equality and women empowerment: “In all interventions and activities envisaged in the culture policy, the issue of gender equality shall be key and at the heart of its implementation process. Trained trainers who will lead the process of promoting cultural values shall include both male and female with inclination to more female than males... / ... In terms of economic initiative from culture activities, **deliberate efforts shall be made to encourage females to actively participate in the various income generating activities to take advantage of wealth creation opportunities that exist in the sector**”.
MINISPOC, 2015

Ingoma Nshya is one of the most relevant cultural reflection / translation of the current political system in which ALL Rwandans stand equal.

As a local non-government organization, **Ingoma Nshya** has been using Rwanda's national gender policy as both a shield from those with entrenched views on the traditional place of women, and a unique and precious asset to pulverize taboos, lift prohibitions, and open the door to a new era of possibilities, precedents and premieres. Thanks to **Ingoma Nshya's** vision, a new paradigm of female leadership in the cultural sector is on the rise, and although barriers still exist, some headway was made and the door is open.

But to **correct** deeply ingrained cultural inequalities is a titanic task which implies to **advance equality and equity** for half of the population right down to the rumbling of drums; the steps of warrior dance, the lyrics of traditional songs, the strings of inanga, the words of poetry and secular proverbs ...



Inspired by other homegrown programs such as “**Gira Inka**” and “**One laptop per child**”, “**Gira Ingoma – One Drum Per Girl**” is launched in 2019 to address persistent gender stereotypes, sexist attitudes and discriminatory patterns that perpetuate inequalities and exclusion in the creative and cultural industries by preventing girls and women to perform non-traditional jobs/roles.

Since 2021, “**Gira Ingoma – One Drum Per Girl**” is ensuring the course of creative arts in primary and secondary schools, is gender responsive by providing several and regular training workshops to hundreds of little and young girls in artistic and cultural fields where they are **excluded, few and/or absent** (drumming, warrior dance, poetry, singing, juggling, etc...).

Breaking all cultural gender taboos

- Once and for all -

Proposed preferential measures

With twenty years of experience, **Ingoma Nshya** has become an inspiring and effective model of transformative cultural action for gender equality whose aim is now to lead to the elaboration of **comprehensive gender transformative measures** addressing discrimination and gender inequality in the creative and cultural industries.

The three following proposed **preferential measures** aim to contribute to:

- ✓ **Bridge** centuries of gender disparities and end sexist attitudes, gender discrimination and intimidation that prevail in the creative and cultural industries;
- ✓ **Increase** the number of girls and women in the cultural domains that are all still the exclusive territory of men;
- ✓ **Foster** a conducive environment for Rwandan female artists to unleash their explosive talents and appear to the world at full strength;
- ✓ **Build** a culture that is made of equality and that is woman-friendly;



Both recommendations are meant to answer the need for “addressing the persistent cultural norms and stereotypes hindering the effectiveness of gender equality and equity,” identified by the revised **National Gender Policy** (NGP). The NGP’s priority area number four is to: “Leverage on positive cultural norms that support best practices for gender promotion. This intends to identify, map gender best practices and address persistent cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and imbalances affecting the principles of gender equality and equity between women and men and girls and boys.” (MIGEPROF, 2021)

1. Quota of 50% of girls and women in artistic and cultural activities where gender-based exclusion and discrimination prevail

Target audience: Rwandan women

Imposing a 50% quota in artistic and cultural fields still dominated by men would be an acknowledgement of the importance of arts and culture in the country and its development. In line with the 30% of women in decision-making organs imposed in the Constitution, this quota would set another precedent, this time cultural, similar to the political one.

The quota could be imposed by the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), the Ministry of Youth and Arts and the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) in all artistic and cultural activities such as drumming, warrior dance (guhamiriza), poetry (kwivuga), inanga, etc...

Any cultural troupe, association or institution offering training in these art forms would have to include at least 50% of girls and women in training AND in public performances. That includes the National Ballet and the National Museum of Heritage, which gives classes in traditional arts in their summer programs, as well as schools that offer arts classes.

2. Implement classes in drumming, warrior dance, poetry, songwriting and juggling for girls in all primary and secondary schools throughout the country.

Target audience: Rwandan girls from age 6 to 18

Gira Ingoma is currently being implemented in **eleven schools** in the **two districts of Huye and Gisagara**. The program is aligned with the **Creative Arts curriculum** developed by the Rwanda Education Board since 2019. The Creative Arts curriculum already includes drumming, warrior dance and singing. The program that Gira Ingoma proposes focuses on girls and adds poetry and juggling. It has been written and implemented over several years, and can easily be submitted for approval and transmitted to trained trainers.

With the technical support of the Woman Cultural Centre and Ingoma Nshya, the Ministry of Education and the Rwanda Education Board could partner with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and the Ministry of Youth and Arts to implement a curriculum that is part of the Creative Arts, but **focused on girls**.

The first phase, over the next five years, would involve training one thousand and five hundred (1,500) girls in Rwanda's thirty (30) districts, with an average of three hundred (300) girls in six (6) districts each year.

3. A dedicated fund to ensure and increase girls and women's participation in artistic and cultural activities where gender-based exclusion and discrimination prevail

Target audience: Rwandan girls and women artists

The creation of a fund dedicated to finance participation of girls and women in every stage of the entire creative value chain i.e. **capacity building, production, distribution and documentation** is key. The fund will foster the development of a thriving female creative and cultural industry by building an ecosystem for aspiring and professional Rwandan female artists to work in decent conditions and enjoy a conducive environment that enables them to unleash their explosive talents and appear to the world at full strength.

In line with the **Gender-responsive Budgeting** that enforces accountability measures for gender sensitive resource allocation across sectors programmes and projects, the fund would be created by the Ministry of Youth and Arts, the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) and the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and would first support the implementation of the two measures suggested above in the thirty Rwandan districts.



EQUALITY

IS

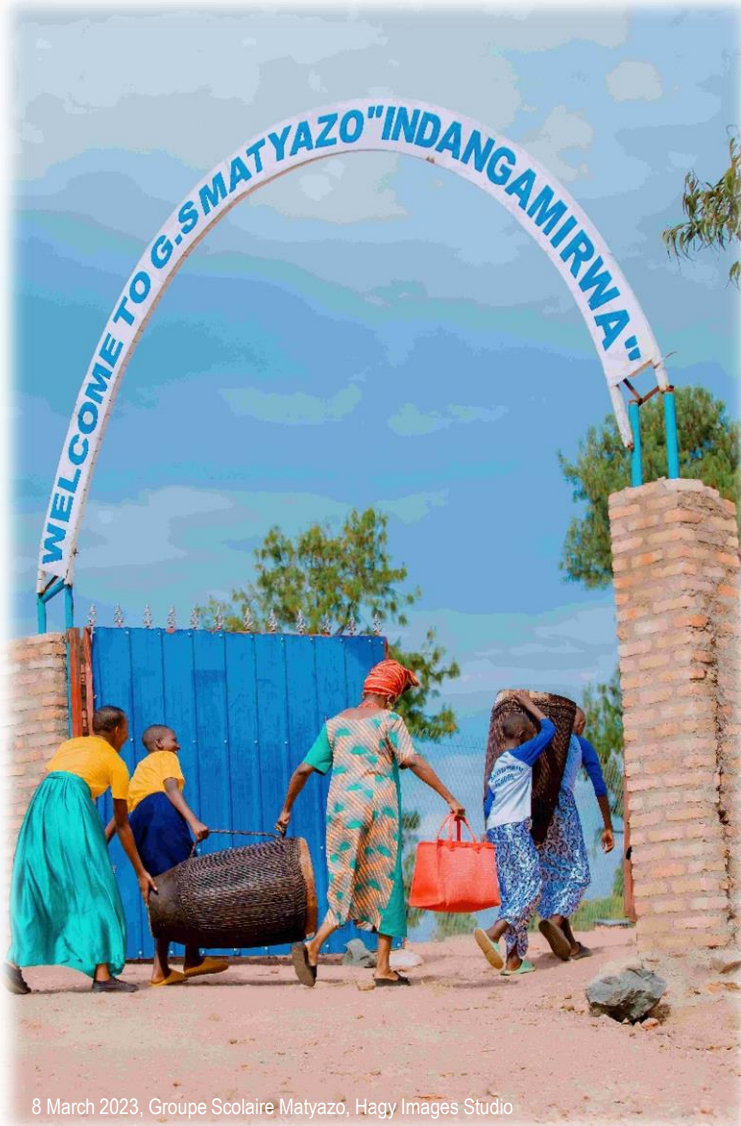
CULTURE



“Gira Ingoma – One Drum Per Girl” seeks to address persistent gender stereotypes, sexist attitudes and discriminatory patterns (norms, barriers, practices, perceptions, etc...) which prevent girls to perform non-traditional jobs/roles in the creative and cultural industries such as drumming, warrior dance (intore), poetry (kwivuga), songwriting, juggling, etc... and therefore, perpetuate inequalities and exclusion.

The strength
of *Gira Ingoma* is that
it is transversal:
it touches on
arts,
education,
gender equality
and
employment
opportunities.

Partnership with 11 schools



8 March 2023, Groupe Scolaire Matyazo, Hagy Images Studio

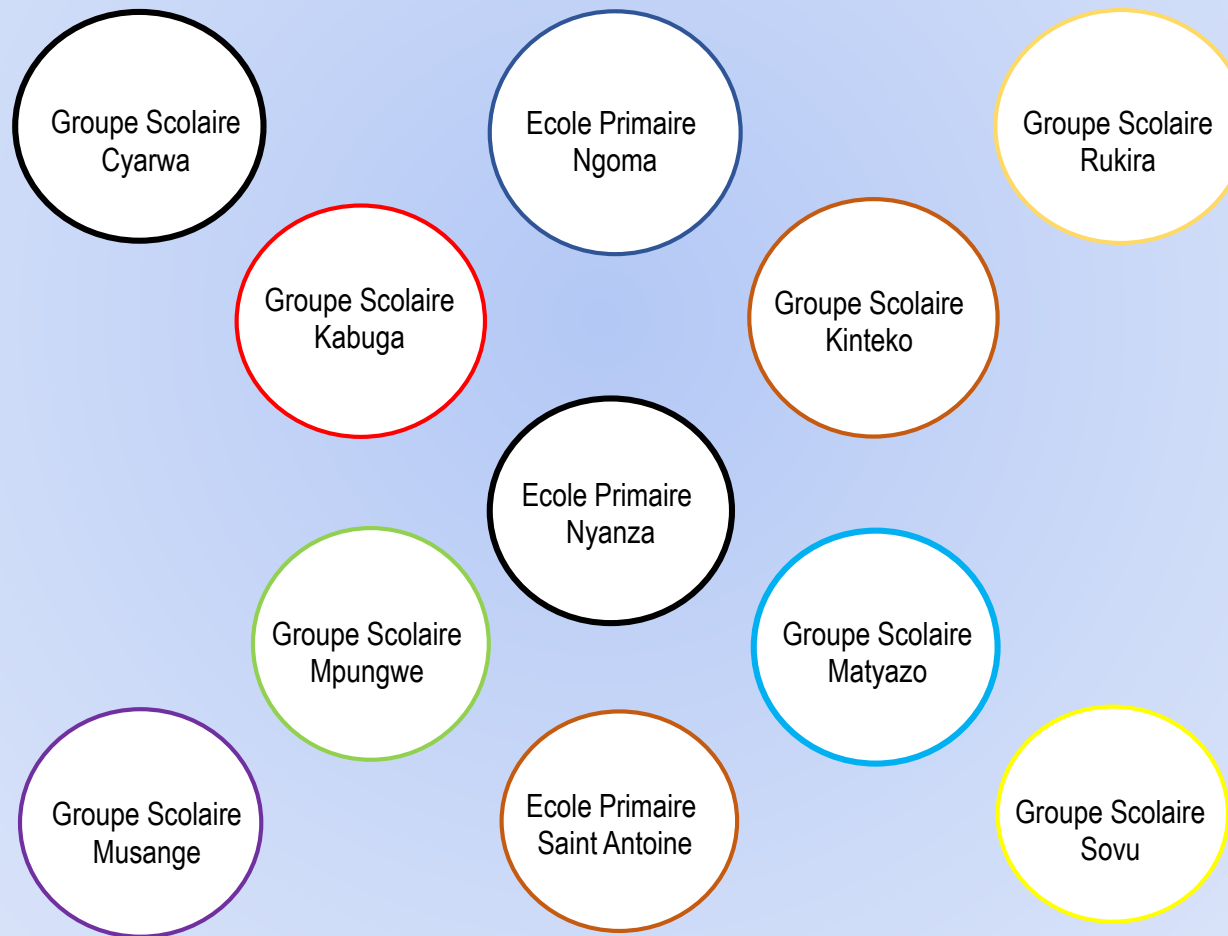


30 December 2023, Huye Campus Gymnasium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 3, Ishimwe Cedric

It takes a village to raise a child



The eleven schools that are part of the program “**Gira Ingoma – One Drum Per Girl**” constitute today a large network that is actively contributing to transform artistic practices that perpetuate gender discrimination and exclusion into practices of gender equality, inclusion and diversity. “**Gira Ingoma – One Drum Per Girl**” has become a whole network of solidarity that goes beyond the trainers and the girls. The school directors, the teachers and the parents partake in it.





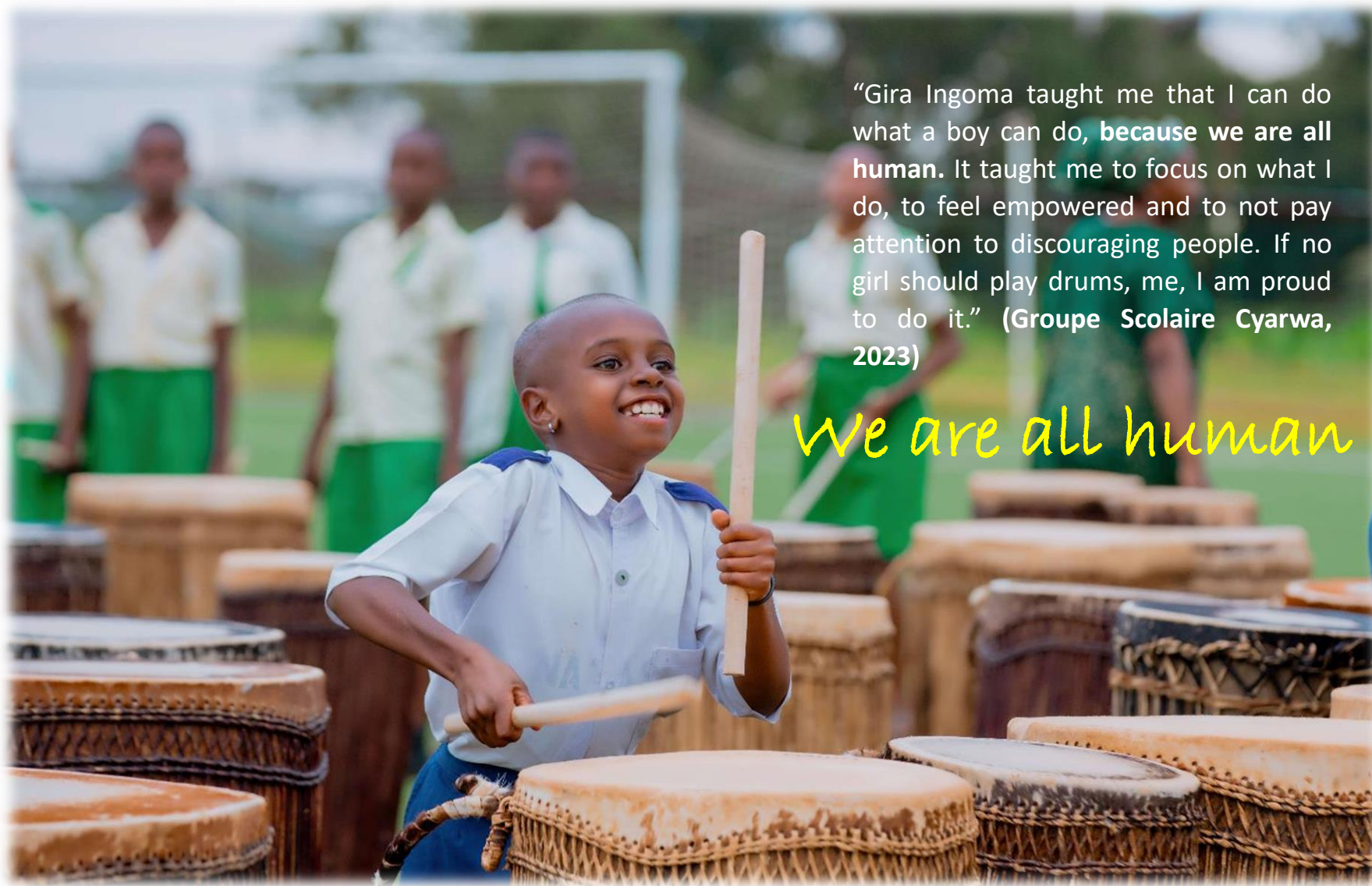
“It is a **joy** to see girls doing precisely what culture didn’t allow them to do before.”
**Nursery, Primary Education and Adult
Literacy Officer, Huye District**



CULTURE

IS

EDUCATION



"Gira Ingoma taught me that I can do what a boy can do, **because we are all human**. It taught me to focus on what I do, to feel empowered and to not pay attention to discouraging people. If no girl should play drums, me, I am proud to do it." (Groupe Scolaire Cyarwa, 2023)

We are all human

“I love it! I think I love it mostly because it’s only about girls. **We feel more at ease with each other.** If you don't understand something, you easily ask questions. But if there are boys around, you feel ashamed. When it's just us girls, we do what we want and help each other out.” (Groupe Scolaire Cyarwa, 2023)









INGOMA NSHYA

Created in 2004, **Ingoma Nshya** (which translates as “New Power and “New Drum”), is the first-ever and only female drumming organization that is culturally empowering women and fostering the making of a culture that is “**woman-friendly**”.

For Ingoma Nshya, **it is crucial that culture protects women’s rights**. Thus the need of revamping traditions and changing the community’s mindset about the role of women.


Twenty years after, Ingoma Nshya **has created a new and important female voice in the Rwandan cultural scene**.

Kuvuza
Ingoma
Drumming

The historic exclusion of women from the drumming arena signaled their exclusion from political life.

Claiming it today is a powerful way to claim agency in public life.



A vibrant photograph of three women participating in a drumming performance at an outdoor festival. The woman in the foreground is wearing a bright green t-shirt with the word 'UPWARD' and a blue geometric logo. She has her hair in long, dark dreadlocks that are flying upwards in motion. She is smiling broadly and holding a wooden drumstick over a large, cylindrical wooden drum. Behind her to the left, another woman in a white t-shirt is also drumming. To the right, a third woman in a dark brown patterned dress and a headwrap is visible, also holding a drumstick. The background is a soft-focus green field with trees in the distance.

The power of a
woman
drumming
is undeniable.

It is
transformational
in both
real and symbolic
terms.



Huye District Representatives, Ingoma Nshya Festival 3 & 4, Hagy Images Studio

“Laws are clear. The policies of our countries are clear. We have good policies, but we hide behind culture to deny girls their rights. Drumming should be a right for girls and not exclusive to boys. Culture needs to change and that change will come from Huye.”
(Director of Business Development and Employment Unit, Huye District, 2023)

It is important to hear a local authority acknowledge the need for Rwandan culture to change as it can actually be an obstacle to women empowerment, as even the Rwandan national gender policy commits to “further strengthen mechanisms addressing the **persistent cultural norms and stereotypes hindering the effectiveness of gender equality and equity.**” (MIGEPROF, 2021)



Vice Mayor in charge of Social Affairs, 28 March 2024, Gira Ingoma Network Meeting, Hagy Images Studio

I will tear down the walls of prohibition

You gifted me with a secret for the future. I will tear down the walls of prohibition. Not even heavy metal can shake me. I will preserve my drum and so will my great-granddaughters.

A verse by Groupe Scolaire Matyazo, 2024

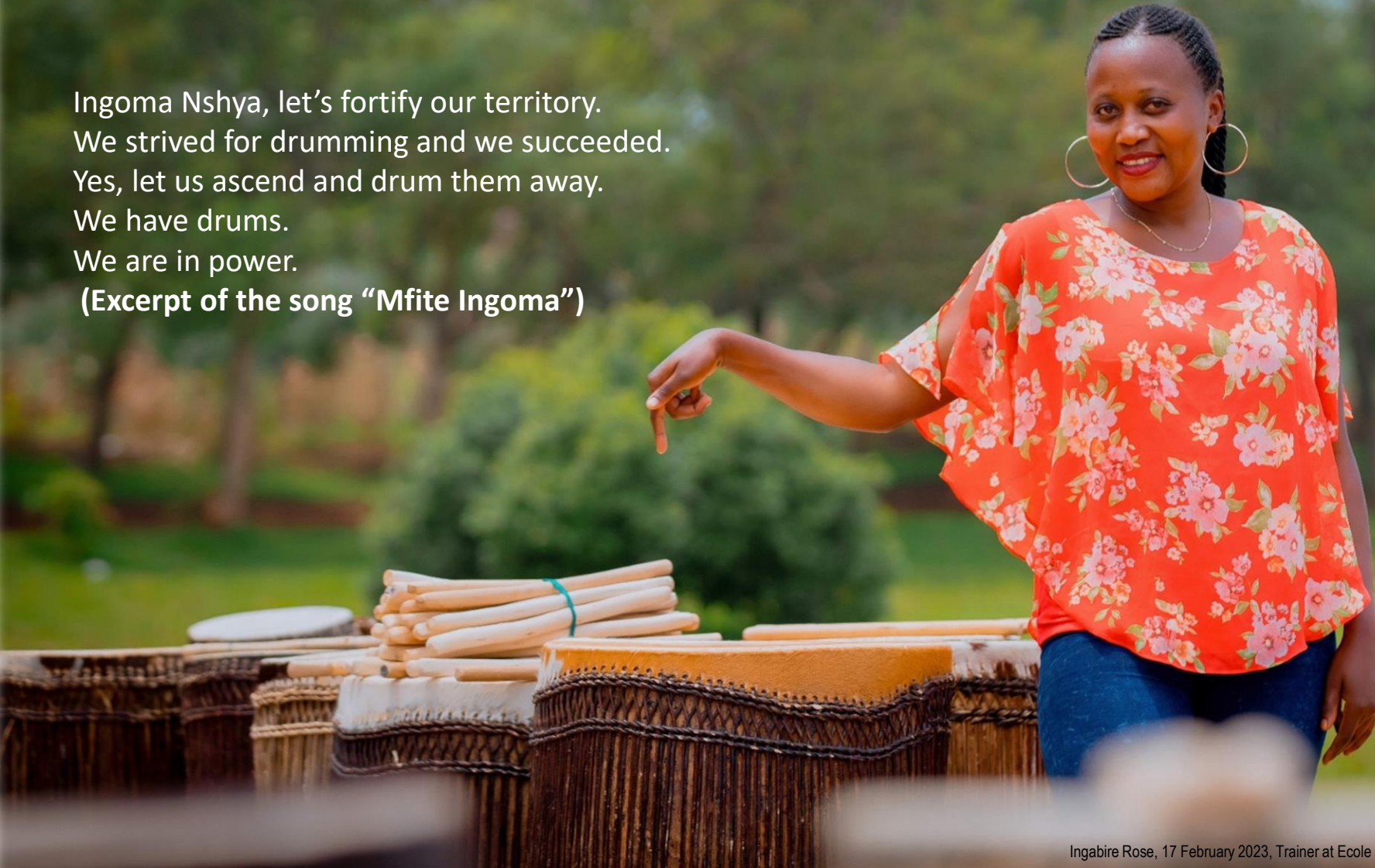


A beneficiary of the program "Gira Ingoma – One Drum Per Girl", Groupe Scolaire Matyazo, Hagy Images Studio

We have drums We have POWER

Ingoma Nshya, let's fortify our territory.
We strived for drumming and we succeeded.
Yes, let us ascend and drum them away.
We have drums.
We are in power.

(Excerpt of the song "Mfite Ingoma")





Uwamariya C, 17 February 2023, Trainer at Groupe Scolaire Rukira, Hagy Images Studio



Nyinawimbabazi C, 17 February 2023, Trainer at Groupe Scolaire Musange, Hagy Images Studio

I am buoyant created by Gihanga, I exhibit to conquer, I am a step of the dancer. I come back with victories when I dress for a battle. I am excellent, I surpass them all. I never escape and I can't betray the battle. Only winners can handle my spear, they get moved by my dance steps. I am a girl who is decorated by smartness, I dance and self-aggrandize. My word is a reality, I remain on the top, I never miss the spotlight. The bell's stomp becomes a call, my shield covers me. No one invades me. I sharpen the arrow. I am a smart light. My drum is my Pride.

A poem by Groupe Scolaire Matyazo, 2024

My drum, my pride



Mark my words, for they will become deeds

You are cherished among mothers, bestowing upon me wisdom for the future. I will teach others self-sufficiency and the promotion of our culture. And I will become prominent. Mark my words, for they will become deeds.

A verse by Groupe Scolaire Kinteko, 2024



Drum with me



8 March 2023, Drumming with local authorities, Groupe Scolaire Matyazo, Hagy Images Studio



Parents, 30 December 2023, Huye Campus Gymnasium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 3, Ishimwe Cedric

“My daughter is one of the leaders, you can see that she's happy and I am too. She has progressed in her studies. You can see that her grades are going up. Before she started drumming, her grades were low, but now they're rising, because she's set herself goals to achieve.” **A parent from Groupe Scolaire Cyarwa, 2023**

Reducing dropouts in schools

"I love drumming because it is reducing dropouts in schools and helping our girls in their studies. They are also learning job creation at a young age."

**Gender Officer, Huye District,
2024**





using drums to communicate ideas and dreams

“If I was a drum, I would be so proud of how you used your sticks with such strength.

If I was a drum, I would be so happy by the way you expressed yourself with such joy.

If I was a drum, I would be so thankful for how you used me as an instrument to communicate your ideas and your dreams.”

Professor Ananda Breed
Principal Investigator
Mobile Arts for Peace

My drum will come true



Guhamiriza Warrior Dance



We are
the change
you are seeing
in Rwanda



18 August 2023, Huye Campus Stadium, Ingoma Nshiya Festival 2, Hagy Images Studio

We are the change we want to see in arts and culture

Gender Policy

For the past 20 years, Rwanda has built strong legal, policy and institutional frameworks to support gender equality and women empowerment. An impressive artillery was deployed to ensure that this principle reaches across sectors: Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), National Women's Council (NWC), Rwandan Forum for Women Parliamentarians (FFRP), ...

In politics, the effects of the legal, policy and institutional frameworks are visible at the level of the country : in 2018, the government had reached parity in the number of Cabinet Ministers and the Parliament was composed of 61.3% of women (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2019: 36).

These numbers are impressive and the majority of women in Parliament is often quoted to show Rwanda's leading place in gender equality in the world.

Priority area 4 of the National Gender Policy:

Leverage on positive cultural norms that support best practices for gender promotion. This intends to identify, map gender best practices and address persistent cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and imbalances affecting the principles of gender equality and equity between women and men and girls and boys.

The creative and cultural industries are far from reflecting the same progress as in the political sphere

Although the national culture heritage policy guarantees its commitment to gender equality and women empowerment, the creative and cultural industries are far from reflecting the same progress as in the political sphere.

In fact, one can read: “in all interventions and activities envisaged in the culture policy, the issue of gender equality shall be key and at the heart of its implementation process. Trained trainers who will lead the process of promoting cultural values shall include both male and female with inclination to more female than males...

In terms of economic initiative from culture activities, deliberate efforts shall be made to encourage females to actively participate in the various income generating activities to take advantage of wealth creation opportunities that exist in the sector”. **MINISPOC, 2015**

It is high time to implement gender equality in culture to fully unravel the restrictions that weigh on women and ensure that change is profound and lasting.

It's not a privilege.
It's not hereditary.
It's learned.

"Culture changes, culture evolves, and circumstances can arise where, though that person used to do that, it is now someone else doing it. It's not a privilege, it's not hereditary, it's learned".

**Manager, Ethnographic
Museum, 2024**

The
obstacles
that once
blocked
my path
are now
clear

The obstacles that once blocked my path are now clear, burdens lifted from my way. I will excel among my peers, combatting illiteracy, never wavering. Success firmly within reach, I will approach challenges with care. **A verse by Groupe Scolaire Cyarwa, 2023**

Capacity building



“The curriculum has been upgraded to include capacity building to support students once they leave school.”

**Nursery, Primary Education and Adult Literacy Officer,
Huye District, 2024**

Traditional values related to the Intore, such as power, integrity, nobility, heroism, bravery, dignity, protection, pride, strength, confidence, ... cannot be exclusive to boys and men.

Girls and women can perfectly personify that.

Having girls dancing imihamirizo (warrior dance) and declaiming ibyvugo (self-praise poetry detailing the exploits of the warrior) means to have them be Intore (the chosen ones). They share their spirit and carry and embody their values in their movements, in their words, in the way they present themselves to the world.





We are the force of the morrow

I will be literate, striving to thrive. I will become a girl brimming with innovations. Dareful, I'll carve my path to success. I will be an artist. I will be a leader. Girls, we are the force for the morrow. A verse by Ecole Primaire Nyanza, 2024

I am a hero like Ndabaga

I am an exemplary girl who worked unworkable to many. They get amazed when I drum. Whoever sees me dance says in awe: “This is a professional dancer!”

My mind gets relaxed when I drum, I score well in my studies aiming for higher education. I am a wide country; I am commendable with my people. I am a reserved pride that shows parents good deeds of creativity. I am a drummer lady who second the first ones to drum in Rwanda. I confirm that “Gira Ingoma” arrived at the right time.

I walk on the frontline. I am a girl who sets a spear firmly. I am a juggler of drumsticks. I attract my spectators and they see a bright future in me. I am a fearless teenager; I entertain my spectators through culture.

I am a girl, I am wonderful. I strive to preserve my earned culture of drumming. I am youthful and I never tempt others, I give them courage. I get fortunate when I dance and the world trembles when I commence. They say: “You defeat cowards.”

I am a hero like Ndabaga. **My spear is fast and sharp**; my enemy becomes a prey when I attack. I never miss a shot. In the battle of men, I attack on the frontline. **A poem by Ecole Primaire Nyanza, 2024**

A group of young warriors, including children and a young woman, are running in a line on a dirt path. They are holding long wooden spears. The young woman in the foreground is wearing a pink top, a denim jacket, and light-colored shorts, and is kicking her leg high. The children are wearing blue and white tracksuits. In the background, there are trees and a line of large wooden drums.

Fearless Warriors

“They are fearless and amazing warriors. You can see an upcoming great army, perfectly tailored for our country.” **Youth and Culture Officer, Huye District, 2024**

You brought light to my path...

You brought light to my path because you empowered me. I will attend concerts and I will be amazing. My spear and my shield, I will make them mine. A verse by Ecole Primaire Saint Antoine, 2024

Songwriting Indirimbo



Gira Ingoma is also building a repertoire of songs and poetry that give the center stage to girls and women and celebrate them. It is not just about their presence in certain arts but mainly about the content that is created.

Girls and women are often praised in songs for their beauty, care and docility. It is time to open their perspectives and present them in a different light.

The girls in schools are creating their own repertoire, in which **all qualities are mixed and work together and notions of masculine or feminine are no longer relevant.**

I have a drum

Today, I have a drum. I am very happy because I have a drum.

I have a drum, you have a drum.

We are very happy because we have a drum.

A song by a girl, Groupe Scolaire Kabuga, 2023



Groupe Scolaire Kabuga, 27 March 2024, Kamena Stadium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 4, Hagy Images Studio

Intergenerational dialogue



Through their songs, an intergenerational dialogue takes place: the girls are claiming the legacy of Ingoma Nshya and paying tribute to their achievements and teaching. They are thus contributing to the symbolic representation of women in culture by setting the women of Ingoma Nshya up as role models and expressing everyone's hopes for the future.

Made of **Us** – Made of **Joy**



"The drum calms me and I soothe others, Inviting them to rejoice together. We are genius, heroes in action, and essential. We have revived our drumming culture and are promoting it internationally. We swiftly conquer. We invite all to know Ingoma Nshya's glow. Yes, we are essential." (Excerpt of the song "Ingoma Nshya")

*"I love these lyrics, they help me a lot. When I sing "We are genius", it gives me confidence that I will make a living in the future, because of my skills. **Gira Ingoma** program has helped me to be courageous and get rid of my shyness. It gave me self-confidence and helped me understand my culture. What you do, I would also do: If you can pick up a spear and a shield and speak, so can I, and everything will be fine." (Groupe Scolaire Kabuga, 2023)*

The new taboo is to turn back

Take the reins of your life
Resume from where I left off



In leadership, I am at the top
I left the drums rumbling again
I successfully broke down cultural taboos



May I chase away
that dizziness of darkness
The new taboo is to turn back
**Excerpt of the song Umurage
(Heritage)**

*Preserving the drum
as your legacy to me*

You didn't speak to a deaf ear, you spoke to a true listener. I will embrace the spectators of an enchanting drum, preserving the drum as your legacy to me. You became my school of life. The drumming soothes me.
A verse by Groupe Scolaire Rukira, 2024



Sleep soundly, for I will love drums till the very end.

I will be a capable and cooperative girl. Wherever you are, know you didn't leave behind a coward.

Sleep soundly, for I will love drums till the very end. I will be the pillar of Gira Ingoma.

I will dance, sing and showcase the great programs of Gira Ingoma.

A verse by Groupe Scolaire Sovu, 2024



I will be an illuminating poem



Your legacy never fails to inspire. I long for your swift voice and soothing songs. I will dance for you, like Inyambo, honoring the noble lessons you taught me.

With a smile, I'll dance for you, hosting incredible shows to your glory. I'll dance tirelessly, a descendant of Ndabaga. Without fear, I will perform remarkable acts to heal wounds.

I will be an illuminating poem, unstoppable in my pursuits. **A verse by Groupe Scolaire Kabuga, 2024**

“In one song, she sings that she's a girl who's not afraid to fight, that she's a brave warrior.

I think she'll be a capable girl, freeing herself from the bad history she was born into. At just eight years old, she has already set herself the goal of becoming a great person.

When she goes to school, I like to tell her: "You sing that you'll be at the top of the power. So go and study hard to become the leader you've decided to become." **A parent from Groupe Scolaire Cyarwa, 2023**



30 December 2023, Huye Campus Gymnasium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 3, Ishimwe Cedric



18 August 2023, Huye Campus Stadium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 2, Hagy Images Studio



EQUALITY

IS

EDUCATION

Kwivuga Poetry



Groupe Scolaire Matyazo, 27 March 2024, Kamena Stadium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 4, Hagy Images Studio



I am a victory for everyone

I am a scorer of “Gira Ingoma”, I exhibit to conquer. I am a genius on drums and my spectators say in awe: “Look at a girl who has a vision!”

I was born to Kamaliza, I am a celebrated hero. Many hearts were warmed by my stage appearance. I surpass them all, I am a pride in knighthood. I never am afraid; I show up on time in times of battle.

I am the strength of my country and a victory for everyone. I am a girl who dared the confusion of geniuses. I am great on the bow, I am a keeper of my achievements. I am a consistent artist; I charm when I juggle a spear. **A poem by Groupe Scolaire Cyarwa, 2024**

I am the pride of women



I am a girl who saved her father from a battlefield. I am a legacy fighter. Those who say that girls are incapable are wrong, Ingoma Nshya taught me to be fearless. I am a girl unashamed of my work. On the battlefield I am supreme, I am an intimidating combatant. I become creative with the drumstick. I am a joy-bringer. I am the pride of women. **A poem by Ecole Primaire Saint Antoine, 2024**



27 March 2024, Kamena Stadium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 4, Hagy Images Studio

I am a messenger to transmit the program of Gira Ingoma. I
am the chosen one to preserve the heritage of Ingoma Nshya.

I beat cowards, strangers study about me.

My acquaintances praise me: "She belongs to Gira Ingoma!"

A poem by Groupe Scolaire Rukira, 2024

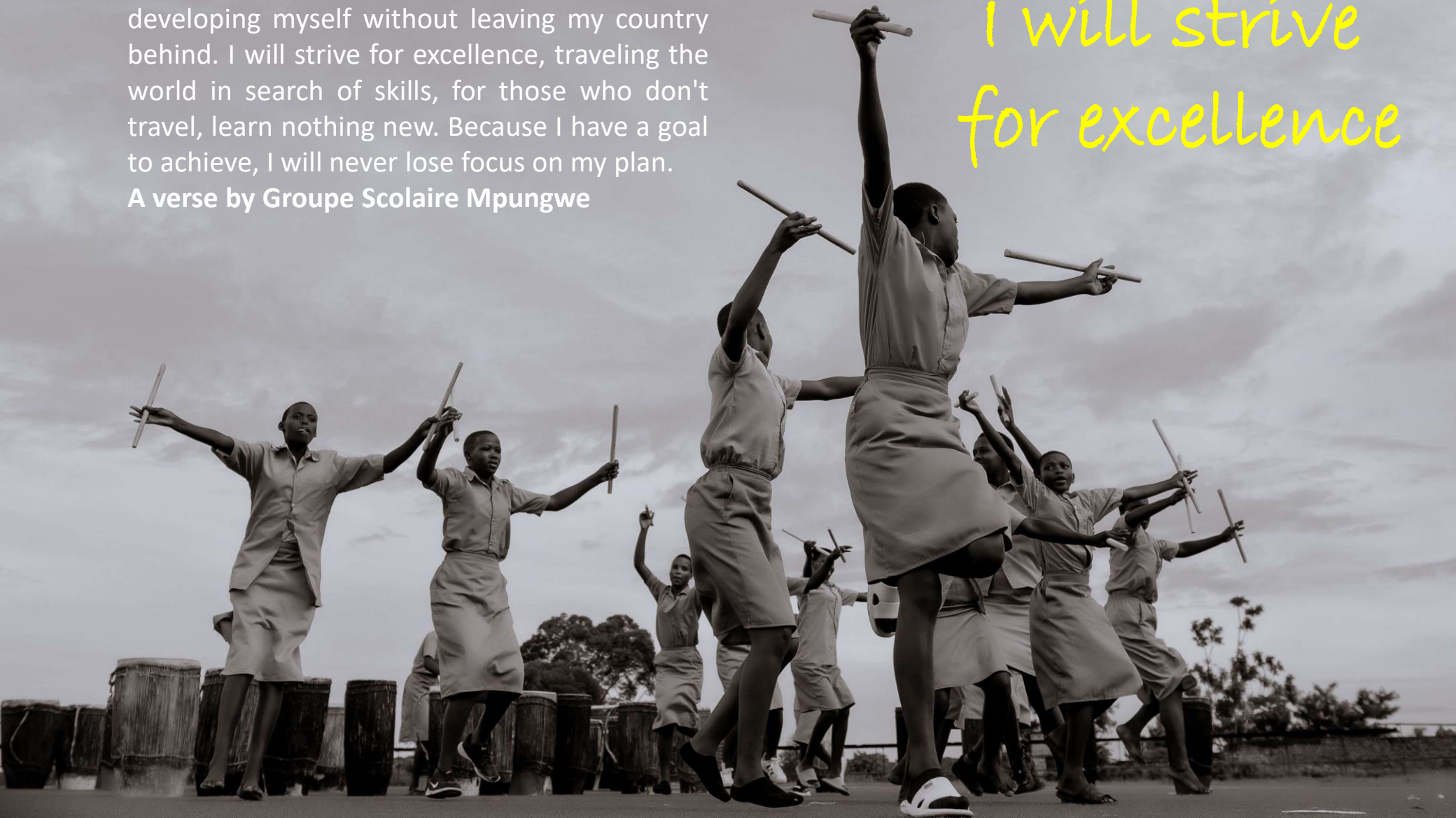


*I am the chosen one
to preserve the heritage of
Ingoma Nshya*

I will accomplish what you have started,
developing myself without leaving my country
behind. I will strive for excellence, traveling the
world in search of skills, for those who don't
travel, learn nothing new. Because I have a goal
to achieve, I will never lose focus on my plan.

A verse by Groupe Scolaire Mpungwe

*I will strive
for excellence*



I am a creative girl who dared to drum, I am a genius for a spear and shield, I excel when it comes to drums. I appear in the front combatants, I show up with confidence and integrity, I toughen like a knight. I am feared never to be intimidated by enemies. On the battlefield I killed enemies and scatted them. And everyone looks up to me when I return home with a victory. **A poem by Groupe Scolaire Musange, 2024**

*I show up with
confidence
and integrity*

I am a girl with purity, my presence is remarkable. I am an unshakable knight. I distinguish in my pledges among dancers, I aim for excellence on my drum. I work with courage; I am a heroic girl. On the battleground, when I take a spear and shield, it makes me bloom my arms with glory. I praise my culture and I keep fortify with unbeatable steps. I am a girl who aims to be on the frontline, never on the backbenchers. I will work hard to reach them when they surpass me for I found valuing myself is a necessity in the world. I shake the right mane, retrieve the one in front and chant-like: "Be calm, be calm, work with courage and try your best. May your feet never tremble to stand on your territory." I am a girl who knows what she wants in her country. I escape stressors, I destroy impede, I crown one who crowns me. Whoever tries me gets destroyed by my brilliance in stomps and drumsticks. **A poem by Ecole Primaire Catholique de Ngoma, 2024**



May your feet never tremble
to stand on your territory

You made us young girls get
a platform to showcase our
unexploited talents

I am a girl who was created by Gihanga
I create drumming, I create dancing
I distinguish to know them

I attract attention
I aim to promote the programs of “Gira Ingoma”
I am surely a knowledge striver!

Gira Ingoma, you came at the right time
You bring serenity
You made us young girls get a platform
To showcase our unexploited talents

You surely came at the right time
We are no longer in darkness
We are the serene and lightened spirits.
A poem by Groupe Scolaire Sovu, 2024



Groupe Scolaire Sovu, 27 March 2024, Kamena Stadium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 4, Hagy Images Studio

Juggling



For I am now
a knight among knights

I will become a girl unafraid to
conquer, achieving the feats
of Ndabaga. I will strive to be
a heroine among champions,
a girl who never betrays
comrades on the battlefield.
For I am now a knight among
knights. **A verse by Ecole
Primaire Catholique Ngoma,
2024**





2 February 2024, Groupe Scolaire Kabuga, Gira Ingoma Awards 1, Hagy Images Studio

Ingoma Nshya Festival

There is something overwhelming, beautiful, powerful, impactful and hopeful in seeing 275 girls from age 5 to 20 beat the drums, dance, declaim poetry, juggle and sing together. Their confidence and their enjoyment is wildly contagious.



"We feel happy, free, and connected."

Groupe Scolaire Mpungwe



Visibility



At each edition of the Ingoma Nshya festival, the young girls tirelessly and creatively depict the women they want to be in the future. They are embodying with joy and talent, the promise of a drumming industry that is female, bold and successful.

Groupe Scolaire Kabuga wins the first Gira Ingoma Awards, 30 December 2023, Huye Campus Gymnasium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 3, Hagy Images Studio

“I have been with Ingoma Nshya for a long time as they were making important steps. One after another. It was hard. We didn’t always understand. How can a woman play drum? But some people understood, that’s why we are here today, with the youth in schools, aligning with gender policy.”

**Advisor of the
Executive Committee,
Huye District**



Advisor of the Executive Committee, 18 August 2023, Huye Campus Stadium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 2, Hagy Images Studio

Did you know that girls were not allowed to play the drums?

Yes, in the past, only boys could play the drums. But today, progress has been made and we can play too.

When a girl does something forbidden, what lessons does she learn?

She understands that it's no longer forbidden. She learns that she has the same power as others and can therefore do the same thing.

What does the Gira Ingoma program do for you?

Gira Ingoma enables children to break out of their isolation, socialize with others and build relationships.

What's your dream? What would you like to do?

I'd like to be a drummer and, like our teachers, travel the world to see what's going on outside the country.



“I really liked how confident she is, how she can speak in public, how she can attract the attention of the audience. I said “wow”, that’s what we really need as women, as activists.”
Never Again Rwanda, Huye Representative, 2023.


On 6 May 2023, the first edition of the Ingoma Nshya festival took place, gathering 250 girls from 10 schools to perform in front of their family and officials from the district. Until April 2024, four editions of the festival took place and they now have 275 girls from 11 schools performing.

Ingoma Nshya Festival is a quarterly festival: in a course of only one year, the curatorial team organized four editions of the festival, the latest being in April 2024.

It is a race against time: there is a need to multiply and amplify initiatives dedicated to girls and women to be able to bridge the gender gap in the creative and cultural industries. If they keep up that pace, in only three years, they will be celebrating the 10th anniversary of the festival and in six years, they will have the 20th edition.

Such initiatives cannot remain in the margins and they have to be integrated to the educational system as well as policy-making institutions.



A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing an orange button-down shirt, sitting and writing in a small notebook. In the foreground, the head and shoulders of a young child are visible, looking down. The background is a blurred crowd of people.

Positioning girls
as determined,
worthy and powerful

"It was a profoundly deep honour to witness and be part of the fourth festival.

I was particularly struck by the bold stances and impassioned voices of the girls speaking warrior poetry (Kwivuga). Their images and voices continued to reverberate around the outdoor track for some time after the event.


The winning team's exuberant charge onto the track, knocking over chairs, was a powerful challenge to the adults in previous festivals, who still attempted to control the girls' bodies, through comments on what they should/should not wear.

Such comments in contrast to the warrior poetry now seemed small and irrelevant.

I witnessed their collective, emboldened charge towards a present, and future, positioning girls as determined, worthy and powerful.

Dr. Sarah Huxley
Post-doctoral Research Associate
Mobile Arts for Peace

Gira Ingoma Awards



Every three months, Gira Ingoma Awards highlights girls' efforts. This incentive encourages their active participation and is a motivation for them to learn, produce new work, definitely remove taboos, take the lead in the drumming sector, and balance out disparity.

Gira Ingoma Awards 1







2 February 2024, Groupe Scolaire Kabuga, Gira Ingoma Awards 1, Hagy Images Studio

Gira Ingoma Awards 2





Jury of Gira Ingoma Awards 2, 27 March 2024, Kamena Stadium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 4, Hagy Images Studio



24 April 2024, Groupe Scolaire Musange, Gira Ingoma Awards 2, Hagy Images Studio



18 August 2023, Huye Campus Stadium, Ingoma Nshya Festival 2, Hagy Images Studio

It's always been exciting and inspiring to witness the work of Kiki and Ingoma Nshya. When I started studying Kiki's work in 2012, she told me she was not afraid to dream big because even if you only do 1% of your dream, you gave it space and shape.

More than 10 years later, I'm in awe of how far she and the women of Ingoma Nshya have come. The dream keeps growing as they go and with Gira Ingoma, they open up new perspectives and create a future for women in drumming and artistic practices that were once inaccessible to them.

They bring new communities on board, as the schools and the parents have become deeply involved in the program and take it on themselves to ensure its sustainability. They catch the attention of new partners who see how in line this initiative is with the country's efforts towards gender equality.

As part of the Mobile Arts for Peace support, Kiki and I wrote an article to reflect on the evolution of Ingoma Nshya and their project, the impact they have been having over the years, and what they and the girls who joined them with Gira Ingoma wish to achieve in the future. Looking both back and forward, the obstacles are real but greater are the possibilities. The dream is growing in so many minds now, taking as many shapes and directions and surprising those who started it. There is a collective energy pushing now more than ever; it can be felt strongly when one sees the young girls perform.

The challenge is to find how we can make the sound of their drums, their feet and their voices echo beyond the district of Huye and disseminate more widely in the country.

Dr. Ariane Nina Zaytzeff
Co - Investigator

Transforming
arts of exclusion
into
arts of inclusion



Logistics

Schools	Number of Girls	Girls participating to the Festival	Trainers	Teachers	Number of Drums	Pairs of Ankle Bells	Spear & Shields
Ecole Primaire Saint Antoine	Over 50	25	1	1	8	25	25
Ecole Primaire Catholique de Ngoma	Over 50	25	1	1	10	25	25
Ecole Primaire Nyanza	Over 50	25	1	1	10	25	25
Groupe Scolaire Cyarwa	Over 50	25	1	1	10	25	25
Groupe Scolaire Kabuga	Over 50	25	1	1	19	25	25
Groupe Scolaire Kinteko	Over 50	25	1	1	10	25	25
Groupe Scolaire Matyazo	Over 50	25	1	1	19	25	25
Groupe Scolaire Mpungwe	Over 50	25	1	1	9	25	25
Groupe Scolaire Musange	Over 50	25	1	1	22	25	25
Groupe Scolaire Rukira	Over 50	25	1	1	9	25	25
Groupe Scolaire Sovu	Over 50	25	1	1	9	25	25
TOTAL	Over 550	275	11	11	135	275	275



Challenges

“Challenges remain. In relation to the number of girls, the equipment is still limited, with three or four girls playing on a single drum. We wear one ankle bell when we need two. We're asking for more equipment, to make learning more comfortable and innovation easier.” **Groupe Scolaire Matyazo)**

“Your help is needed for the girls of Gira Ingoma to thrive” **Groupe Scolaire Kinteko**

“If we work together, hand in hand, we can achieve more and build our country.” **Ecole Primaire Catholique de Ngoma**

Working hand in hand





*"I want to become
a renowned percussionist
and achieve great things."*

Groupe Scolaire Cyarwa





*“Societies that recognize the real
and untapped socioeconomic,
cultural, and political power of
women thrive.*

*Those that refuse to value and
leverage women’s talent, energies,
and unique skills remain
developmental misfits.”*

**His Excellency Paul Kagame
President of the Republic of Rwanda**



*"I am seeking for companions, alliances,
partnerships and collaborations to take the old
dream and the old drum to the young generations."*

Gakire Katese O. (Kiki)



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