# Empowerment at the City of Joy?: A study of the effectiveness of a leadership program for survivors of sexual violence in Eastern DRC[[1]](#footnote-1)

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**Abstract**

Sexual violence constitutes a massive challenge in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Many survivors of sexual violence face marginalization and social exclusion among family members and in their local communities. A number of support programs are in place to support survivors of sexual violence and other vulnerable women. One such program is City of Joy, which focuses on transforming vulnerable women into community leaders. This paper presents results from a repeated survey with participants in this program at the time of starting the program, and the end of the program, as well as interviews with a subset of the women 3–8 months after they left the program. Our results indicate that the young women who go through the training at City of Joy display significant changes in their attitudes and knowledge about women´s empowerment and leadership. We do not find any clear differences in this improvement for various demographic subgroups given by difference in education level and poverty. We conclude that the City of Joy program has a strong immediate effect on changing the participants’ views on women leadership, but that further research is needed on the degree to which – and for whom—these positive changes endure after the women re-enter their communities.

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