

IMPACT



Drive to thrive

Young entrepreneurs taking their businesses further in Democratic Republic of Congo

Plus, stories of overcoming adversity from Ethiopia and Peru

April 2026

Talents Pluriels program helps young entrepreneurs cook up success


Pélagrine Makela is a young entrepreneur taking concrete steps to grow her business.

She is the proud founder of an event planning company, providing catering and event decorating services and now hiring a team of 12 people in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Although she started the business informally in 2019, in 2024 she got all her official documents.

That's when she joined Cuso's Talents Pluriels program, through local partner Si Jeunesse Savait. She took training courses, developing her skills and writing a business plan.

In the future, Pélagrine plans to open a restaurant, as well as set up a training centre to teach culinary arts. The natural leader also wants to encourage other young people to participate, to dare to take the first step.

Thanks to donors like you, young entrepreneurs like Pélagrine can access the supports they need to grow and find independence through entrepreneurship. But don't expect her to give away her secret recipes!



"This program enabled me to become more efficient, to manage my business better. Before, I didn't keep records or track my inventory. But now, my business is properly organized, as it should be."

THE CUSO EFFECT

Between 2022 and 2026, the program achieved significant results in DRC:

- **6,754 youth** trained in employability and entrepreneurship
- **3,236 participants** supported in self-employment or business creation
- **3,873 family and community members** reached through extended impact
- **640 small enterprises legalized**
- **450 youth** hired or placed in internships

DID YOU KNOW?

Each year, thousands of youth in DRC enter the formal labour market in search of decent jobs, but regardless of their level of education, they struggle to find work – forcing them to turn to the informal sector.

Scan to watch more stories



Adding layers: Furthering education through adversity

Working in her salon, Hana Tamene Totoba is doing her client's hair using a flat iron when the electricity goes out. She rolls with it.

“Even when the power goes out, you have to get creative” she says with a smile.

Hana, a displaced person in Ethiopia, is showing how perseverance and breaking barriers can bring about new horizons. In Ethiopia, girls are less likely to attend or complete school because of social, economic and cultural barriers, such as working a side job, early marriage, or limited access to educational resources.

Hana graduated from Cuso's U GIRLS 2 program, which helps increase access to higher education for high school girls in the country, applying a holistic approach. She now owns a hair salon. A product, she says, of being a graduate of the program.

At the same time, she is taking her education even further, taking courses in pharmacy studies with the ambition to go into the pharmaceutical field. She talks about her dreams of expanding her business to include nail treatments and a makeup area. The lights come back on and Hana continues.

With her drive and motivation, along with the right support and the right tools, Hana demonstrates how you can overcome limitations.

And how donors, in supporting core programs like U GIRLS 2, can help girls to move through those barriers and dream bigger.



Opening the door for mental health supports

In Peru, a vital door has been opened for many LGBTQ2IA+ people: free access to mental health services and legal counseling with an affirmative approach.

In the past, many have faced situations of discrimination or Gender-Based Violence (GBV) alone, not knowing who they could turn to for support, as the State often fails to provide specialized or affirmative services for their community.

Through Cuso's Renewed Voice and Leadership program, LGBTQ2IA+ people who were victims of discrimination or GBV have been able to receive psychological and legal support in a safe environment, where they were treated with respect, empathy, and understanding.

This service means more than guidance: it represents quality, non-discriminatory support, something they often cannot obtain from public or private services. The impact shows, with participants sharing the service has reduced their depression and anxiety, and addressed serious consequences of GBV, such as post-traumatic stress and more.

One of the persons supported shared: **“It has been the best possible help. Without this support [psychological and legal], I feel the process would have been slower. I am very grateful for everything.”**



Time to Act

A national movement powered by volunteers

Cuso has joined 14 other Canadian organizations with funding from Global Affairs Canada to shine a light on positive actions that are transforming the world.

Time to Act is a Canadian national movement that celebrates volunteering, community involvement, and contributing to positive change. Led by 15 organizations funded by the Government of Canada through the Volunteer Cooperation Program, the movement aims to celebrate gestures, big and small, that truly make a difference. Locally and globally.

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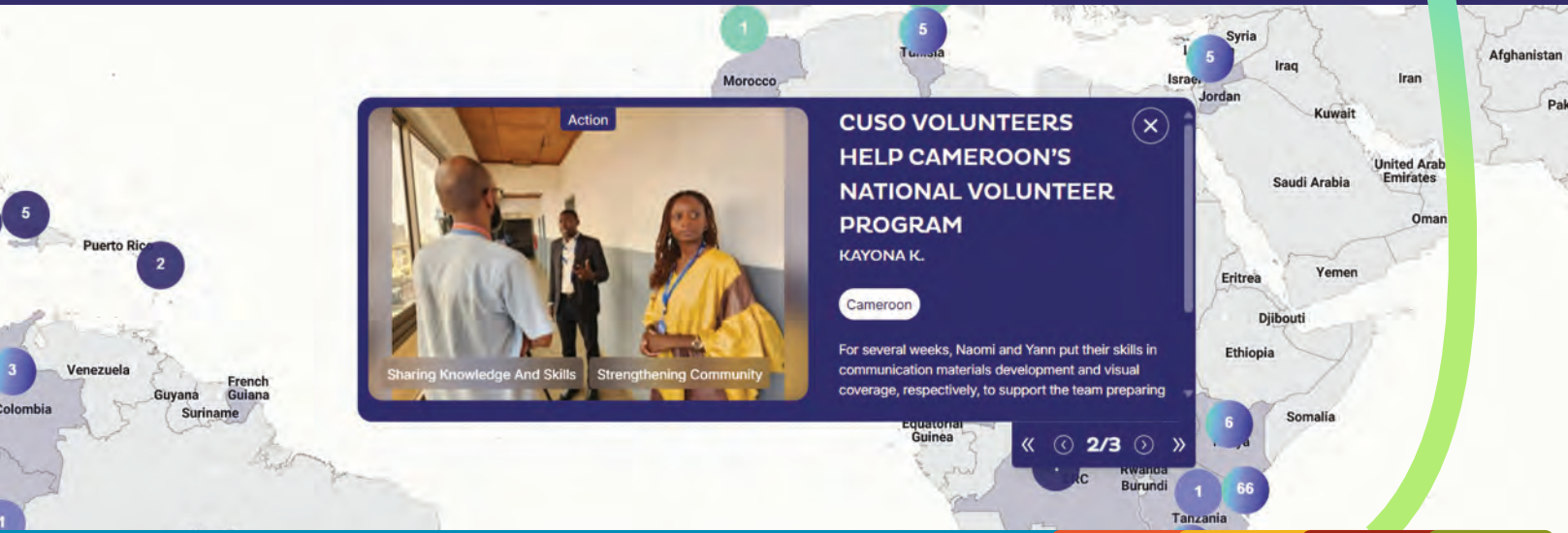
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