

Women with Disabilities: Kinama Camp, Burundi

Diane (24 years old)

“When I became disabled my family disowned me. They were ashamed of me, which made me ashamed of myself. I lost all of my self-esteem, I felt like I had no value in my family or my community. Everyone abandoned me, and why? Because I was walking with a crutch? It didn’t seem fair. They no longer saw me as a person who could be successful.

“I received a call that IRC [International Rescue Committee] was looking to have women with disabilities included in their VSLA [Village Savings and Loan Association] programs. I was so excited to register, to be included, to have a chance to prove myself. As the program started and people saw that I was part of it, people started to respect me more. I gained confidence. Before I couldn’t speak in front of a crowd, even talking to others made me nervous. Now I am very proud to share my story with others, to talk in front of people to make sure that my experience is heard. I have my self-worth and self-esteem back.

“I feel so happy, I am a mother to two children now, I can take care of them, I can provide for my needs. My family may have abandoned me, but I will not abandon them. Now, even, I feel it is my obligation to reach out to other people with disabilities. To raise awareness, to share my story, to tell them that they can be included, too.”

