



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026

Dear friends,

Welcome to the first IGNITE quarterly newsletter of 2026. Over the past three months, IGNITE partners and grantees have continued to drive powerful change for adolescent girls across Africa and the Middle East through bold advocacy, innovative programming, and strong locally led action.

This edition highlights key moments, stories, and milestones from across the network, offering a snapshot of the impact being made on the ground and the collective momentum building behind girls' education and empowerment.

Make sure to stay connected to and informed about IGNITE's work

- ♀ Visit our website ignite.rescue.org
- ♀ Subscribe to this newsletter by writing to igniteproject@rescue.org



Group of girls receiving stationary from IGNITEe Association pour un monde meilleur in Southern Burkina Faso

SPOTLIGHT ON CHANGE-MAKERS

FROM THE MINES BACK TO SCHOOL: RECLAIMING FUTURES FOR GIRLS IN DRC

In Haut-Katanga, Democratic Republic of Congo, many youths are working in dangerous cobalt mines, often forced to choose survival over schooling. This reality is robbing thousands of girls of their education, health, and future.

Through an IGNITE-supported initiative, the feminist movement Bisobasi Telema, accompanied by Urgent Action Fund Africa and IRC, is helping girls break free from mining work and return to the classroom. So far, 35 highly vulnerable adolescent girls have been re-enrolled in school, receiving tuition support, supplies, and close follow-up to prevent a return to the mines.



But the work goes beyond individual support. Bisobasi is engaging families and community leaders to challenge harmful norms around girls' education, while working with the IGNITE team to strengthen public awareness and advocacy. By combining direct action with efforts to influence authorities and mining stakeholders, the initiative is laying the groundwork for lasting change.

[Read the full story](#) to learn how education is restoring hope for girls in mining-affected communities.

HOW GIRLS IN LEBANON ARE REWRITING THEIR FUTURES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY AND LEADERSHIP



In Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, where economic hardship, under-resourced schools, and social norms limit girls' opportunities, a new initiative is helping adolescent girls imagine different futures. Launched in 2025 by the Michel Daher Society Foundation (MDSF) with IGNITE funding and close accompaniment from IRC and RMF, the Tech Change Makers program is opening doors through a unique combination of English learning, digital skills, and leadership training.

For 180 girls in the Zahle District, the program marked a series of powerful

firsts: using a laptop, writing an email, coding a simple program, or speaking English in public. Beyond technical skills, girls gained confidence, teamwork, and a stronger voice, learning to see themselves as capable leaders and changemakers. By addressing both educational gaps and psychosocial needs, Tech Change Makers is shifting mindsets in schools and communities alike.

[Read the full story](#) to discover how technology and leadership are reshaping girls' futures in Bekaa.

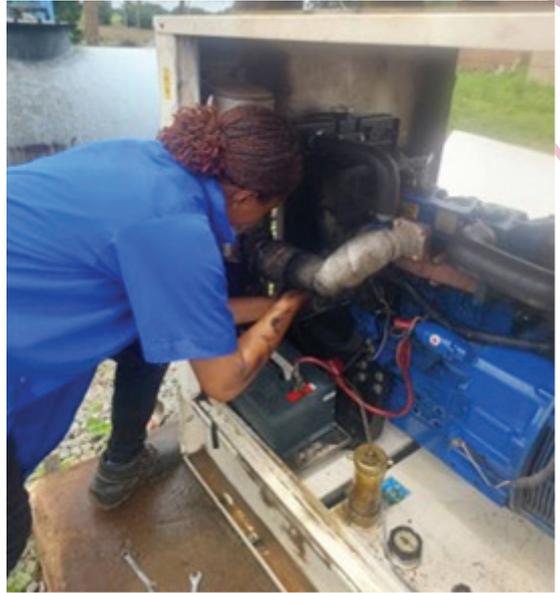
BREAKING STEREOTYPES, BUILDING INDEPENDENCE IN BURKINA FASO

In Burkina Faso, where school dropouts, youth unemployment, and forced displacement are widespread, access to vocational training can be life-changing. In Bobo-Dioulasso, the APDJFE, supported by IGNITE, is helping young women build economic independence by opening doors to promising professions—some that directly challenge social norms.

In 2025, 49 vulnerable young women, including several internally displaced girls, were selected to take part in vocational trainings ranging from baking and graphic design to plumbing and solar energy, fields often considered “men’s work”. For many, it was their first real opportunity to learn a trade, earn an income, and imagine a future beyond precarious work or dependence.

Despite pressure linked to social norms and logistical challenges, the program adapted and supported the girls through graduation, and facilitated internships with public institutions. Today, participants are working, earning, and imagining a better future, while shifting perceptions in their communities.

[Read the full story](#) to discover how skills training is reshaping futures and breaking gender barriers.



ONE GIRL'S JOURNEY TO RECLAIMING EDUCATION: HOPE AND CHANGE IN JORDAN



In Mahis, on the outskirts of Amman, 17-year-old Layla once stood on the verge of leaving school for good. Pressured by economic hardship, family expectations, and gender-based violence, her education and confidence were slipping away. Like many girls in Jordan, she faced the risk of early marriage as a coping mechanism for poverty and insecurity.

With support from IGNITE and partners IRC and RMF, the Jordanian Women’s Union (JWU) implemented a

community-based program to tackle gender-based violence and keep girls in school. Through life skills training, psychosocial support, and sustained engagement with families, the project reached 87 adolescent girls across six locations—creating safe spaces where girls could rebuild confidence and reclaim their rights.

For Layla, the change was transformative: she returned to school, improved her grades, and began to envision a future shaped by her own aspirations.

[Read the full story](#) to discover how early intervention and community support are changing girls’ lives in Jordan.



RAMPING UP CAPACITY SHARING ACTIVITIES

Capacity sharing remains a core pillar of IGNITE's approach, alongside financial support and strategic accompaniment, to strengthen locally led feminist action over time. By the end of 2025, more than 350 individual and collective capacity-sharing activities had been delivered, responding to the evolving needs of CSOs across Africa and the Middle East.

In November, IGNITE launched CSO-led communities of practice (CoPs), creating new peer-learning spaces within the network. One CoP focused on communicating about results, where two organizations shared and discussed their communication strategies with peers.

This momentum will continue in the coming quarter, with a dense schedule of activities planned for January and February to foster interregional learning and collaboration. All related materials are made available to the full network through [IGNITE's online resource platform](#).

IGNITE AT THE 4TH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICIES

In October 2025, IGNITE Programme Director Emily Jacquard participated in several side events of the 4th Feminist Foreign Policy Ministerial Conference in Paris, while UAF Programme Director Jean Kemitare attended the main conference. The event convened governments, multilateral actors, and civil society to advance feminist approaches in diplomacy, development, and humanitarian action.

Throughout the week, IGNITE engaged in high-level discussions on feminist funding, locally led action, and accountability in fragile and crisis-affected contexts. Drawing on the consortium's experience, these exchanges highlighted pathways to achieving meaningful and lasting change for girls and women.

The conference also offered valuable opportunities to connect with policymakers, donors, and peer initiatives, strengthening IGNITE's visibility and informing its ongoing advocacy, partnership, and resource mobilization efforts.



STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION DURING THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM



During the 16 Days of Activism, IGNITE-supported CSOs strengthened their advocacy efforts and visibility by engaging in joint actions with IRC country offices in several countries. This collaboration enabled CSOs to take part in national campaigns, workshops, and awareness-raising activities.

Through these engagements, organizations were able to present their work, share their messages, and reach wider audiences alongside IRC teams, increasing recognition of both their initiatives and IGNITE's approach.

Beyond the campaign period, these exchanges contributed to expanded networks, stronger partnerships, and amplified feminist voices within national and regional advocacy spaces.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS ON THE GROUND IN ETHIOPIA



In October 2025, IGNITE's Coordinator and Urgent Action Fund conducted a partnership visit to Ethiopia, meeting with seven local feminist and women-led CSOs operating in fragile and rapidly evolving contexts. The visit provided an opportunity to engage directly with partners, exchange on progress and challenges, and discuss priorities for the months ahead. Across all meetings, the leadership, resilience, and innovation of local organizations were clearly visible.

According to IGNITE's monitoring data, these initiatives collectively reached an estimated 11,415 adolescents and 19,014 community stakeholders across the country, underscoring both the scale and depth of locally led action. The delegation visited schools and IDP camps where girls participate in safe spaces offering educational support, menstrual hygiene kits, and opportunities for self-expression through drama, poetry, and song. Other initiatives included peer mentorship between university students and displaced girls, as well as child-led research on social norms affecting girls' education.



Most importantly, change was evident in the girls themselves and echoed by those supporting them daily. As one teacher shared, "Girls now speak more freely; they trust us." Parents also reported feeling actively involved in the change taking place within their communities.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

6 FEBRUARY – INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

The [International Day of Zero Tolerance for female genital mutilation](#) (FGM) provides an opportunity to highlight progress and raise awareness to end this harmful practice.

11 FEBRUARY – INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE

The [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#) was established to promote equal access and participation in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), and to address the gender gap and challenges like bias and underrepresentation while inspiring future generations.

8 MARCH – INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

[International Women's Day](#) is a major global moment for feminist advocacy, visibility, storytelling, and movement-building.



WHAT IS IGNITE?

IGNITE is a 36-month project, led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in consortium with Urgent Action Fund-Africa (UAF-Africa) and René Moawad Foundation (RMF).

IGNITE is funded by the French Development Agency (AFD) through the Support Fund for Feminist Organizations (FSOF).

The IGNITE Consortium supports 86 local feminist and youth-led CSOs to address the gender norms that hinder adolescent girls in and through education. The IGNITE Consortium provides support through grant-making and collaborative capacity-sharing — programmatic, organizational, technical, research, and advocacy — all aimed at advancing safe and inclusive education for girls. This support is grounded in sustainable, locally driven approaches that strengthen the leadership and impact of grassroots women-led organizations.

IGNITE runs from March 2023 to May 2026 and covers 7 countries within two regions (Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa).



€10 million

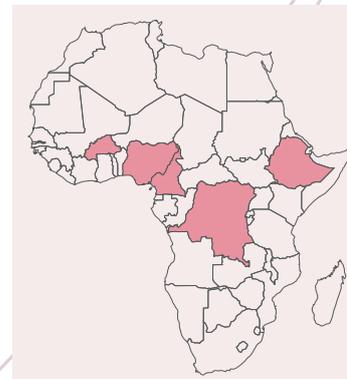


72 grants

AFRICA

60 CSOs in 5 countries:

-  Burkina Faso
-  Cameroon
-  DR Congo
-  Ethiopia
-  Nigeria



MIDDLE EAST

26 CSOs in 2 countries:

-  Jordan
-  Lebanon



IGNITE CONSORTIUM



The IRC is a humanitarian organization founded in 1933 which seeks to help people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster, including the climate crisis, to survive, recover and gain control of their future.



UAF-Africa is a feminist, Pan-African, rapid response fund committed to transforming power relations through resourcing African feminists and women human rights defenders and their formations as an act of solidarity.



The René Moawad Foundation's mission is to promote social, economic and rural development in Lebanon and the MENA region and to contribute in building a responsible civil society that promotes democratic values, justice, pluralism and moderation.

FUNDED BY



Launched in 2019, the [Feminist Organizations Support Fund \(FSOF\)](#), managed by the French Development Agency (AFD) is France's flagship feminist diplomacy initiative, providing long-term support to feminist civil society organizations around the world.