



Blossom Bridge Initiative
Climate, Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



A JOURNEY OF IMPACT





Message from the Executive Director

As we look back on 2025, I am happy for the collective care and commitment that shaped our work throughout the year. This was a year of listening more closely, working more intentionally, and staying grounded in the realities of the communities we serve.

While Rwanda has made efforts toward gender equality, with policies and programs that promote women's participation and leadership in society, we see again and again that a lot still needs to be done, because injustice and gender inequality remain a critical issue.

Blossom Bridge Initiative (BBI) exists to promote gender equality and environmental stewardship by empowering women and girls in all their diversity to actively participate in decision-making and drive sustainable community development through education, advocacy and collective action.

As the founder of BBI, having grown up in an abusive and conflicting household, my experiences became a motivation to help others as I understood firsthand the isolation, the self-doubt and the struggles to find love and acceptance when it's missing at home. My journey in gender and human rights advocacy seeks to support women with similar experiences. My goal is to create a world where women's voices are not only acknowledged but also economically empowered and their rights respected.

Blossom Bridge Initiative creates a support system I wished I'd had, where women can be reminded that they are valuable, capable and that they can unleash strength from their past. We aim to inspire and bring attention to the stories and lived realities of young women and girls and motivate them to be aware of how their mental health limits their personal development, to overcome this obstacle and to be able to learn a trade and generate income.

As we move forward, the challenges ahead remain significant. Yet, so does our work. By staying grounded in community realities, standing firm in our values and working collectively, we continue to build pathways toward justice, healing and economic independence.

I am deeply grateful to our members, staff, partners and communities for their trust and commitment. Your leadership continues to shape our work and our future.

Together, we move forward with clarity, courage and care.


Josine Umuhiza,
Founder and Executive Director, Blossom Bridge Initiative CBC



How We Drive Change

Blossom Bridge Initiative (BBI) is an intersectional, women-led organization that supports women and girls in all their diversity. BBI is a registered Community-Benefit Company (CBC). Formerly known as Health and Equal Rights (H.E.R.O) and founded in August 2018, we envision a society that cherishes and advocates for the well-being, diversity and inclusion of marginalized women and girls.

Our approach is rights-based and community-led, integrating psychosocial support, gender and climate action, advocacy and skills development. We aim to transform the lives of vulnerable and marginalised young women and girls through understanding their needs, facilitating peer support groups and nurturing them in different areas to better contribute to their community. We use a holistic approach to create pathways toward a healthier future in which Rwandan girls can thrive.

Through social and economic justice, we have been promoting girls' and young women's independence and active participation. We nurture leadership qualities and encourage them to participate actively in their communities by creating entrepreneurship opportunities and vocational training, access to finance, promoting saving and income generating initiatives.

Our 2025 focus remained clear: to centre lived experiences through tailored data approaches and respond more intentionally to the interconnected challenges of sexual and reproductive health (SRH), gender-based violence (GBV), climate change, and psychosocial support. By integrating economic empowerment initiatives, we built pathways toward dignity and independence for all. This year demonstrated the power of collective effort. Healing journeys were inspired through creativity, confidence grew through skills-building and economic opportunities, and connection deepened through peer support.

As part of our holistic approach, BBI empowers marginalised women and girls by guiding them through interconnected stages of support, from healing and mental health to financial literacy and skills development, and ultimately to economic independence and leadership.



STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

TAILORED APPROACH THROUGH DATA

Community-led data strengthened relevance

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In February 2025, we convened our first formal Annual General Assembly that marked a key moment in strengthening shared leadership and accountability within the organization. Bringing together all 35 members, staff and volunteers, we had a collective reflection on the organization's journey, values, and direction. Members engaged deeply with the organization's history which gave us a space of deep connection, ongoing work and structures, reinforcing a shared understanding of responsibility and belonging.

During the Assembly, a draft of our upcoming five-year strategic plan was shared for feedback and recommendations, which were later integrated into the revised strategy.

Members identified priorities around education and skills development, advocacy, stronger partnerships and collaboration, and increased participation in organisational leadership and decision-making.



The Assembly ultimately produced a community-informed strategic direction for 2026 and beyond, ensuring that the organisation's future work reflects community-identified priorities rather than assumptions.



SEX WORKERS NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

Focused on the life conditions of Sex workers, from Cooperative Abemeye Guhinduka in Mbungagari Cell, Rubavu District.



The needs assessment of 20 sex workers between 18 to 51 years old provided important data on the intersecting challenges they face that range from economic challenges, mental health issues, access to healthcare and challenging working conditions. While facing the specific challenges of working and living close to the DRC border, the assessment highlighted unique health, economic, and social barriers that continue to limit well-being and economic stability.

The assessment found that 9 out of 10 participants reported that their income was insufficient to meet their needs, 8 in 10 had no access to mental health services, and 9 in 10 reported experiencing violence while working. In addition, 73.68% of the participants reported feeling unsafe at work. These findings highlighted the urgent need for interventions that address economic security, psychosocial wellbeing and safety simultaneously, rather than as separate issues.

The findings strengthened our understanding of how poverty, stigma and limited access to services increase vulnerability. This evidence informed more targeted program design, advocacy priorities, and partnership strategies, ensuring that responses tackle root causes rather than temporary gaps.



TEENAGE MOTHERS NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

To understand the social, economic and health challenges of teenage mothers in Musave Cell, we documented and assessed the challenges they face including stigma, poverty, isolation and limited family and health care support.

The assessment of 36 teenage mothers highlighted how these barriers affect not only young mothers but also their children and society as a whole. Findings revealed impacts to those with children, such as risks related to nutrition, access to healthcare and early childhood development.

The assessment revealed that 83% of the participants were already raising one child and that most first pregnancies occurred during adolescence, particularly between ages 17 and 18.



The findings reinforced how early pregnancy is closely linked to ongoing economic vulnerability, limited support systems and reduced opportunities for education and employment, affecting both young mothers and their children.

By combining primary data with data from Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey, the assessment provided a clear evidence base for practical, community-informed recommendations. This process amplified their voices and strengthened the advocacy effort for interventions that promote dignity and long-term stability for both teenage mothers and their children.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Community-led data strengthened relevance, accountability and long-term impact

EXPANDING MARKET ACCESS THROUGH DIGITAL INCLUSION

We advanced the development of an e-commerce platform designed to provide women artisans and small-scale producers with direct access to buyers, reducing reliance on intermediaries and lowering the financial and social costs of selling their work. By creating a safer and more accessible marketplace, the initiative challenges structural exclusion while expanding income opportunities.

The platform creates a practical pathway for marginalized women to sell their products safely, earn directly from their skills, and build income without facing the financial and social barriers common in traditional markets.



MARKET-DRIVEN OPPORTUNITIES

BBI supported women in pursuing income-generating opportunities that align with existing market demand, personal interest and realistic entry points into earning. This approach strengthened motivation, reduced dropout from trainings and increased the likelihood that skills gained could translate into sustained income.

Wheels to Opportunity: Transportation as a Career Path

Through a combination of theoretical and practical lessons, 12 participants were equipped with skills in car driving and motorcycle riding, with 6 obtaining their driving licences, providing the competencies and possibility of employment in delivery, transport and mobility services, opportunities that were previously out of reach due to financial constraints. Marginalised young women who could not afford lessons independently gained not only licenses but also greater independence.

A documentary captured their journeys, offering visibility, inspiring similar initiatives and demonstrating how targeted support can translate into economic empowerment. BBI envisions supporting connections to formal marketplaces and employment opportunities, aiming to convert these newly acquired skills into long-term livelihoods.



Notes of Opportunity: Music as a Career Path

Building on prior interests from 8 participants who took music lessons as a form of healing, in 2025, music offered both creative and economic potential for young girls and women.

Through guitar, piano and drum lessons, young girls and women developed technical skills that enabled them to form a band and start exploring performance opportunities to generate income.

Beyond the financial benefits, the training fostered self-expression, confidence and social solidarity, demonstrating how arts-based initiatives can simultaneously promote emotional well-being and economic independence.



Painting a Path to Economic Independence

Through creativity and career development, visual arts workshops, with a focus on painting, provided 10 participants with both skills and pathways to earn income.

Targeted training enabled women to produce marketable artwork and navigate ways for selling their creations, training that had previously been inaccessible. Many participants, mostly school dropouts with limited employment opportunities, gained confidence, technical expertise and practical strategies to turn creativity into sustainable income, creating an economic pathway to long-term stability.



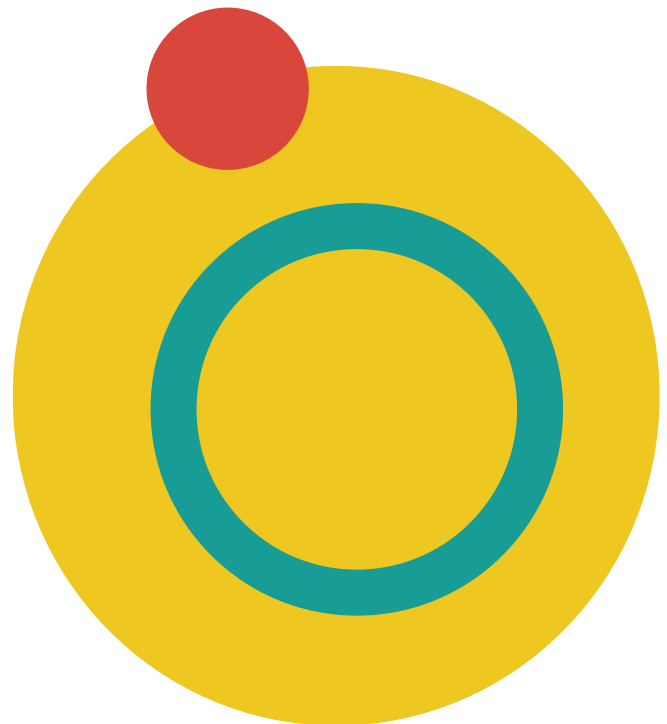
LILLO UP: FROM VISION TO ACTION

Through the LILLO UP methodology, a workshop for young girls and women strengthened economic empowerment by equipping 10 participants with financial literacy, goal-setting and career readiness skills. The sessions provided tools to plan and shape their futures, bridging personal development with income-generating opportunities. Participants gained skills in self-assessment, entrepreneurial planning and professional development.



This support led to financial independence, increased confidence in pursuing careers, and the ability to translate skills into sustainable livelihoods.

The workshop
**strengthened participants'
agency, self-
determination and
capacity to envision long-
term economic stability.**





PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE

Community-led data strengthened relevance, accountability and long-term impact

In 2025, BBI focused on strengthening mental well-being and fostering resilience, ensuring that marginalized women and girls could pursue independence while overcoming social and economic challenges.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

We expanded our mental health support by combining traditional group therapy with financial therapy and mindfulness.



ringing together 16 diverse women facing mental health issues as a result of childhood trauma, Gender-Based Violence and related issues, sessions addressed the link between financial instability, trauma and emotional well-being.

Participants explored the psychological roots of their financial behaviors, recognized emotional triggers and learned healthier coping strategies.

This approach helped reduce financial anxiety, gain clarity on their personal goals and build sustainable financial practices within a safe, supportive environment.



PEER EDUCATORS TRAINING FOR MARGINALIZED WOMEN

To strengthen community support systems, we developed a peer educator program. 8 participants completed basic counseling training, equipping them to provide guidance, mentorship and psychosocial support within their communities.

This initiative fostered a culture of healing and peer support among young girls and women, reduced self-stigma and strengthened acceptance among participants.



By promoting peer-led care, BBI ensured that healing and independence are not only individual achievements but also collective,

**reinforcing resilient
communities where women
support one another.**

The training increased the number of people within the community who can provide psychosocial support and respond to mental health concerns. Trained peer educators are now able to support others within their own communities, creating additional pathways for healing and wellbeing. Their skills are also being utilized in community-based activities and support initiatives, enabling them to contribute to community healing while creating economic opportunities for themselves.

GENDER JUSTICE AND SAFETY

Community-led data strengthened relevance, accountability and long-term impact

At BBI, advancing gender justice means creating spaces where women and girls can claim autonomy, access accurate information and make informed choices about their bodies, health and future.

In 2025, our interventions focused on ensuring safety, knowledge and agency, particularly for those facing heightened vulnerability due to age, social stigma or economic marginalization.

SRHR TRAINING

Teenage mothers often face challenges, including stigma, limited access to healthcare and pressures that threaten their education and economic opportunities.

SRHR training sessions equipped 35 teenage mothers with practical knowledge on reproductive health and family planning, empowering them to make informed decisions about their bodies and futures.

The sessions created safe spaces for peer exchange, enabling participants to share experiences, build mutual support and reduce isolation.

Teenage mothers developed greater confidence in accessing healthcare systems, asserting their rights and advocating for themselves and their children, laying the groundwork for long-term well-being and autonomy.



SUPPORT GROUPS

Community-led data strengthened relevance, accountability and long-term impact

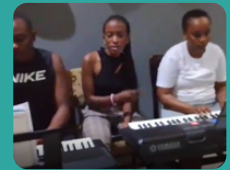
BBI empowers marginalised women and girls by guiding them through interconnected stages of support, from healing and mental health to financial literacy and skills development, and ultimately to economic independence and leadership. Our support groups create safe spaces where participants navigate social, economic and personal challenges while fostering community solidarity.

We currently have two groups; **Her Life Journey** and **Safe Me for A Better We**

HER LIFE JOURNEY

A Support Group for BBI Members

In 2025, Her Life Journey focused on economic empowerment. Through different activities, participants gained practical skills in painting and entrepreneurship. They reported increased confidence, financial autonomy and a stronger sense of self-worth, demonstrating how support through mental health, skill-building and economic opportunity can work together to foster independence.



SAFE ME FOR A BETTER WE

A Support Group for Leaders

To ensure sustainable and community-led healing, we train leaders from different community-based organisations and individuals to better support their communities through peer educator training and mental health awareness.

In 2025, we focused on economic empowerment and mental health awareness. Participants in financial mindfulness and peer educator sessions developed skills to manage personal finances, plan for income generation and support peers in mental health awareness. This work reinforced leadership, agency and resilience within the community.



ORGANISATION HIGHLIGHTS



A SISTER COMPANY TO STRENGTH LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

In 2025, in direct response to global funding cuts and the lack of funds for Rwanda, to strengthen long-term sustainability, we established a subsidiary company, Vibes Ventures Co., a Community Benefit Company.

Vibes Ventures Co. functions as an income-generating subsidiary of the organization, designed to support program continuity while creating economic opportunities for marginalized women.

Among many, the company delivers services in:

Event hosting

Tourism Activities and etc ...

Outside catering

Transportation

Consultancy

Media and documentation

All services are led and delivered by our right holders who are members of the organization, positioning skills as economic value.

Revenue generated through Vibes Ventures Co. is reinvested to support community members, sustain organizational work and strengthen long-term financial independence.

Profits circulate back to the community and contribute directly to programs.



Vibes Ventures Co

About

Vibes Ventures Co is a tour guide initiative empowering women in all their diversities by providing them with opportunities in the tourism industry. Through Vibes Ventures, women showcase their talents and gain valuable skills, fostering economic independence and self-confidence. We provide mentorship and support, promoting inclusivity and diversity in tourism.



VISIBILITY

As a registered, feminist and community-based organization, we continue to fiscally host local minority and marginalised groups. This role allows learning and supports movement building by providing administrative stability, shared accountability and space for collaboration, while allowing partners to focus on their advocacy and community work. Our visibility is grounded in creating space for others, strengthening solidarity and supporting shared values of justice, care and inclusion.

Our hosting is rooted in transparency, shared responsibility and open communication with hosted partners. It is guided by clear policies and trust-based relationships that emphasize mutual accountability, contributing to a supportive environment for collaboration and collective growth within the feminist movement.

Our 2025 hosting and roles included:

Local hosting

- IDAHOBIT2025: Fiscal hosting was provided, including financial management, compliance, reporting, and collaboration on community mobilization, advocacy and visibility; ensuring accountability and smooth implementation.
- Free To Be Me close-out event: As the implementing host, our role focused on coordination, community engagement, supporting branding and participation.

International

The BBI office provided full-day inclusive hosting with a physical space offering a safe and secure location for our partners to carry out their events. All logistical needs were catered for, including venue setup, meals and refreshments.

During these events, we ensure a professional, welcoming and fully supportive environment for convenings, strengthening our role as a trusted host for both local and international partners.

The hosted events for 2025 include:

- MOLI closing program (Rwanda)
- Gender at Work Power Up Program endline evaluation



STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

We have developed a comprehensive five-year strategic plan to guide our activities, growth and impact. The plan incorporates feedback from staff, Board and community members, ensuring that our work remains responsive to the needs of marginalized women and girls. The strategic plan was developed through a collective and intentional process that brought together learning, reflection and community priorities. This ensured the plan reflects both lived realities and organizational experience.

The strategy captures the transition we are entering as an organization, marking the next five years. It responds to what women and girls continue to face, including economic exclusion, stigma and limited access to safety and resources.

The strategic plan provides a shared roadmap that aligns programs, partnership and internal systems, and supports long-term impact by prioritizing dignity, economic independence, healing and leadership. It also reflects a collective vision for growth that is rooted in care, justice and sustainability.

FRIDA ALUMNI NETWORK

After five years within the FRIDA network, we joined the FRIDA Alumni community to strengthen our organizational capacity. Becoming part of the alumni network created opportunities for deeper learning and peer exchange.

Through this space, we are currently mentoring a young women-led growing organization. The mentorship focuses on sharing experience, strengthening systems and supporting leadership development. This relationship also supports collective growth beyond individual organizations. Being part of the alumni network reinforces solidarity and long-term movement building.



POLICIES REVIEW BY OUR BOARD MEMBERS

A comprehensive review of organizational policies was conducted to ensure that governance structures remain transparent and aligned with organizational values. The process focused on updating existing frameworks, clarifying roles and responsibilities and strengthening decision-making processes across the organization. The review considered lessons learned from past program implementation, staff and member feedback and legal requirements.

The review strengthened internal accountability mechanisms and identified gaps and areas for improvement. Policies were updated to reflect the organization's commitment to feminist principles.



TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

BBI STAFF COLLECTIVE CARE (RETREAT)

Focused on the intention to unplug, reconnect and plan together, the staff retreat created intentional space for rest, reflection, and collective planning at a critical moment of transition for the organization. Bringing the team together outside of daily work allowed us to look back at the last five years with honesty and pride. Through shared reflection, we identified what has worked, what needs strengthening and what must change as we grow.

Strategic discussions helped align teams around priorities for the next five years, including sustainability, program focus and staff wellbeing. Time dedicated to rest and connection reinforced care as a core feminist value, not an afterthought. The retreat strengthened trust, clarity and shared responsibility across the team, directly shaping the direction of the strategic plan.



STAFF CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS

Our staff and volunteers participated in capacity-building training throughout the year. These included training in project management, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation, financial management and communications.

The training strengthened both individual skills and team effectiveness. Staff were better equipped to manage programs and respond to community needs. Learning together also encouraged peer support and shared accountability. Overall, these training improved the quality and consistency of our work.





BUILDING BRIDGES PARTICIPATION



Our Executive Director attended the Building Bridges program in the Netherlands, creating opportunities for international learning, networking and advocacy development. The Building Bridges Storytelling Programme served as a strategic networking and visibility platform, enabling direct engagement with international human rights activists, human rights defenders and allies.

The programme strengthened cross-regional relationships, deepened movement solidarity and positioned BBI within global human rights and social justice spaces.



EMERGING LEADER WITHIN OUR MIDST

Sylvie Kagaba, our communications and IT officer, an emerging leader within The Women Deliver Emerging Leaders for Change Program, continued her mentorship.

As a feminist and advocate focused on leveraging technology to advance women's lives, within this two-year leadership program that supports passionate young activists with the resources, platforms, connections and training necessary to amplify and achieve their advocacy goals. Sylvie focuses on ensuring access to SRHR services for marginalised women and girls in all their diversity, targeting the intersecting challenges between economic independence and access to healthcare. She thus trains on workplace inclusion and leverages technology to bridge to healthcare access.

She attended the Women Deliver 2020 conference alongside our Executive Director



**Women
Deliver**



OUTCOMES *and* IMPACT



Key impact include:

- **Healing and Resilience:** Participants in group therapy and creative workshops in music and art developed stronger coping skills, reduced feelings of isolation and built peer support networks that provided safe spaces for collective healing.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Through financial mindfulness coaching, LILO UP training and creative arts, participants gained practical skills in saving, planning and entrepreneurship. Many explored music and art as opportunities for income generation and long-term financial independence.



KEY FIGURES

6 women started businesses

8 Mental health peer educators trained and graduated as community counselors

9 women trained to professionally use musical instruments

10 women participated in the LILO UP Program

10+ women participated in an art workshop to explore creative talents

12 women trained in driving cars and motorcycles, and 5 have already acquired their licences

16 women enrolled in financial mindfulness coaching and therapy

35 members participated in the General Assembly, contributing to organizational planning

35+ teen mothers created a safe space to discuss sexual and reproductive health issues

1000+ reached through our online platforms

Thank You to Our Partners and Supporters

We are grateful to our 2025 partners and supporters whose contributions fuel our work to empower marginalised women and girls. Your support enables us to sustain programs, strengthen communities and advocate for dignity, rights and independence.

2025 PARTNERS INCLUDE:



Board of Directors



Acknowledgements

We thank our funding partners and allies for their generous support and shared commitment to creating a world where every marginalized woman and girl has full control over her body, life and opportunities. Your trust, guidance and partnership make our work possible.

