

Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe Newsletter



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Welcome!

Dear readers,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of the Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe (PFTH) Newsletter of 2026.

This edition highlights the inspiring work and achievements made possible through the dedication of our members, partners and communities.

The stories highlighted in this newsletter demonstrate the power of collective action and community leadership.

We are also reminded that meaningful change often begins with small steps and grows through partnership, resilience, and a shared commitment to gender equality and inclusion.

I invite you to explore these stories and celebrate with us the progress we continue to make together toward a more just, inclusive, and empowered society.

Dr. Gahongayire Liberata, Chairperson, PFTH

Empowered Women, Stronger Nation: Stakeholders Unite to Advance Gender Equality in Rwanda



"Empowering women is not only a matter of rights but also a cornerstone of sustainable national development."

Kigali, April 1, 2026 – Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe (PFTH), in collaboration with CECI Rwanda, hosted a national celebration on , marking International Women's Day under the theme "Umugore ni uw'agaciro – Empowered Women, Stronger Nation."

The event brought together representatives from government institutions, civil society, development partners, the private sector, PFTH member organizations, and other Women's rights organizations to reflect on Rwanda's progress in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

Participants highlighted the significant contributions of women to national development while acknowledging the barriers that still limit full equality and women's empowerment.

"As we celebrate the remarkable progress Rwanda has made in advancing gender equality, we must also reaffirm our collective responsibility to address the persistent barriers that women and girls continue to face. Empowering women is not only a matter of rights but also a cornerstone of sustainable national development."

Together, we must continue to champion inclusive policies and strengthen partnerships that ensure no woman is left behind" noted Dr. Liberata Gahongayire, Chairperson of Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe.

Speaking at the event, Ms Olive Zimulinda Ingabire, the CECI Country Director said: "International Women's Day 2026 serves as powerful call to action for all stakeholders to invest in women's potential, recognizing that gender equality is not only a fundamental right, but also a catalyst for Rwanda's inclusive and sustainable socio-economic transformation."

The discussions emphasized the importance of collaboration, sustained advocacy, and inclusive policies to ensure that progress continues while young women and men showcased the products of their entrepreneurial products and shared their journeys of growth and success.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment from stakeholders to work collectively toward a more inclusive and equitable society.

Empowering Women Through Cross-Border Trade: The Transformative Impact of PRO-FEMMES TWESE HAMWE

The Empowering Women in Informal Cross-Border Trade (EWICBT) project, implemented by PRO-Femmes Twese Hamwe, demonstrates how investing in women's economic empowerment can transform not only individual lives but also families, communities, and national development.

Through targeted support to women engaged in small-scale cross-border trade between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the project has enabled thousands of women to become economically active, socially empowered, and key contributors to development through a cooperative model. At the core of the project is the strengthening of women's economic capacity and resilience.

By organizing women into 95 cooperatives and 60 associations and providing entrepreneurship training, financial literacy training, and mentorship, the project has empowered over 4,450 women of Rubavu and Rusizi Districts to actively participate in income-generating activities. These efforts have translated into measurable economic gains, with cooperatives recording average annual income increases of Frw 2,600,000. As a result, women are no longer passive economic actors but drivers of household and community prosperity.

This economic empowerment has had a direct impact on family health and well-being. With increased income, women can now afford essential services and basic needs, such as health insurance (Mutuelle de Santé), Ejo Heza (long-term savings schemes), food, clothing, school fees, and better living conditions.

The Empowering Women in Informal Cross-Border Trade project isn't just about boosting incomes. By weaving sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) into its work, it helps women traders thrive both economically and personally proving that strong businesses start with strong wellbeing.

Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services has improved significantly, with more than 2,553 beneficiaries linked to services. This additional initiative has strengthened women's health, productivity, and ability to sustain their businesses.

Beyond the household, empowered women are playing a crucial role in societal development. The project has strengthened men's engagement in gender equality and household decision-making, with 99% of women reporting support from their husbands in key decisions, particularly those related to health and economic activities.



4,450+ women of Rubavu and Rusizi Districts to actively participate in income-generating activities.

This shift reflects changing social norms and greater recognition of women as equal partners in household development. Women are also actively engaged in cooperatives, peer learning groups, and community networks, where they share knowledge, mentor others, and promote collective growth.

The impact extends to national and regional development. Women engaged in cross-border trade contribute to economic activity, strengthen trade links between Rwanda and the DRC, and support social cohesion and peace.

The EWICBT Project, locally known as “Tuinuwe Biashara Mupakani” in Kiswahili, is funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and implemented by Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe (PFTH) in Rwanda as the lead organisation, and by Initiatives for Peace and Human Rights (iPeace) in DRC.

The project aims to contribute to mitigating the effects of conflict between DRC and Rwanda by empowering women engaged in informal cross-border trade.

Following the successful implementation of Phase I from December 2019 to March 2023, Phase II commenced in April 2023 and will run until March 2027.

Find out more about the EWICBT Project in this code:



Strengthening Malaria Prevention Through Indoor Residual Spraying in Northern Province



Equipped Community Health Workers ready for Indoor Residual Spraying in Musanze District

From 9–31 March 2026, Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe (PFTH), in collaboration with the Rwanda Biomedical Centre, district authorities, health facilities, and local leaders, conducted a large-scale Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) campaign across ten malaria hotspot sectors in Rwanda's Northern Province.

Targeting communities with the highest malaria burden, the campaign aimed to strengthen protection against malaria transmission and improve community health outcomes.

Communities at the Heart of Success

A key feature of the campaign was its strong focus on community engagement. Community Health Workers and local leaders mobilized households, addressed misconceptions about spraying, and encouraged participation through awareness sessions and local meetings.

This collective effort enabled the campaign to spray 55,902 of the 55,977 structures identified across Gicumbi, Gakenke, Musanze, and Rulindo districts, achieving an impressive coverage rate of 99.86%.

Alongside spraying activities, households were encouraged to consistently use mosquito nets, maintain environmental hygiene, and seek early treatment when symptoms appear.

The campaign's success highlights the importance of coordinated action and community ownership in malaria prevention, bringing Rwanda one step closer to eliminating malaria as a public health threat.

Contributing to Rwanda's Malaria Elimination Goals

This campaign demonstrates the power of coordinated action and community engagement in malaria prevention. Through its partnership with the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) and support from the Global Fund, PFTH is contributing to the implementation of Rwanda's 2020–2027 Extended National Malaria Strategic Plan (NSP), which aims to reduce malaria morbidity and mortality by at least 90% from 2019 levels by 2027.

As part of this effort, PFTH supports the implementation of the National Malaria Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) Strategy in Rwanda's Northern Province. The strategy seeks to sustain high levels of malaria awareness and knowledge, ensuring that at least 85% of the population adopts correct and consistent malaria prevention and control practices.

By strengthening community understanding, addressing misconceptions, and promoting positive health behaviours, initiatives such as the IRS campaign are helping to advance Rwanda's goal of eliminating malaria as a public health threat.



Valens Ruhorimbere, one of the 20,000 young people targeted by the VIBE Programme in Rwanda, turned pumpkins into opportunity, by founding Iwacu Bakery Ltd in Gatsibo District.

Empowering Women and Youth-Led Businesses to Create Jobs and Grow Markets

Across Rwanda, women and young entrepreneurs are transforming their businesses, creating jobs, and strengthening local economies through the Value Added Initiative to Boost Employment (VIBE) Programme.

Creating Opportunities for Growth

Implemented by PFTH in partnership with TradeMark Africa, the International Trade Centre, and the Mastercard Foundation, VIBE supports women and youth-led Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in horticulture, poultry, dairy, and meat value chains. The project aims to create 14,250 dignified and fulfilling work opportunities for young people while enhancing business competitiveness and growth.

To date, the project has reached 16,743 entrepreneurs, 83% of its overall target, and supported the creation of 9,503 jobs. Women account for 10,080 of the project participants, while over 5,000 youth-owned enterprises have received direct support.

The project has also strengthened access to finance by equipping nearly 4,900 business owners with practical skills in saving, bookkeeping, and loan management.

Through linkages with financial institutions, 23 MSMEs secured financing worth more than RWF 84.5 million to expand their operations and improve productivity.

VIBE is helping entrepreneurs access new markets and increase their incomes. 79 MSMEs participated in trade fairs, exhibitions, and business networking events, generating more than Frw 23 million immediate sales and securing 193 long-term business contracts. Additionally, 25 enterprises were linked and trained to get the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) certification, enabling them to meet quality standards and reach wider markets, while 50 MSMEs improved their branding and competitiveness.

Beyond business growth, the project is tackling social norms and gender stereotypes that often limit women's participation in entrepreneurship. Through research and advocacy, VIBE is promoting a more inclusive business environment where women and young people can thrive as entrepreneurs and job creators.

While challenges such as access to finance, certification, and affordable packaging remain, VIBE continues to equip entrepreneurs with the skills, resources, and opportunities needed to build resilient businesses and create sustainable employment across Rwanda.

Scan the QR code to find out more about the VIBE Programme:



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From uncertainty to Opportunity: Ernestine's Journey in Agribusiness

Ernestine Niyonkuru, a 28-year-old young woman from Ntarabana Sector in Rulindo District, has transformed from a female youth who viewed agriculture as a low-status activity into a successful agribusiness entrepreneur and community leader.

Her journey began after joining the SERVE Project, implemented by Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe (PFTH) and other consortium partners with funding from the Mastercard Foundation through CARE International.

The project aims to create a resilient, sustainable, gender-equitable, and inclusive entrepreneurial environment that expands dignified and fulfilling work opportunities for predominantly female youth in agricultural value chains, including poultry, chili, green beans, and tomatoes, across 10 intervention districts.

With PFTH, she participated in Journey of Transformation (JoT) training, especially the session about *Power Within* which empowered her and built her confidence. As a result, she recognized her potential as a young woman in agriculture. *"Before, I felt that my opinions did not matter much. But after the trainings, I became more confident and started believing that I could also succeed,"* she says.

Inspired by the knowledge and confidence gained through the project, Ernestine started chili farming on a small piece of family land alongside her brother. By applying improved farming practices and gradually expanding their operations, they increased productivity and diversified their income sources.

Today, Ernestine cultivates 25 ares of chili, employs three permanent and eight casual workers, and earns an average monthly income of approximately RWF 200,000 excluding expenses compared to just RWF 20,000 before joining the project.

This remarkable growth has enabled her not only to create employment opportunities for other youth, but also to support some workers with health insurance.



"My message to young people, especially girls, is not to despise any type of work. Start small, learn from others, stay focused on your goals, and believe in yourself."

Beyond improving her livelihood, Ernestine has become an activist and joined other female farmers to actively challenge harmful gender norms, promotes youth participation in agriculture, and encourages predominantly female youth to pursue opportunities in agribusiness.

"My message to young people, especially girls, is not to despise any type of work. Start small, learn from others, stay focused on your goals, and believe in yourself. Agriculture can change your life if you take it seriously," she says.

For Ernestine, the journey is about more than income. It is about finding her voice, building confidence, and creating opportunities for others.

"Today, I feel strong, proud, and look forward to a brighter future," she concludes with a smile.

Her story shows how confidence, skills, and opportunities can empower young women to lead, succeed, and inspire others.

Growing Stronger Together: LTA Mentorship Building Sustainable Women's Rights Organisations



Women Rise for Change organization participating in the LTA Mentorship Programme, strengthening its capacity to empower and support teen mothers in Mahama Refugee Camp.

Women-led and women's rights organizations play an important role in promoting gender equality and advancing the rights of women and girls in Rwanda. However, many grassroots organizations face challenges related to governance, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

To address these challenges, Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe (PFTH), in partnership with CARE International in Rwanda and with funding from the Government of Norway, is implementing the Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability (LTA) Mentorship Model under the Powered by Women Project.

The program supports ten women-led and women's rights organizations in Nyagatare, Gatsibo, Ngoma, and Kirehe districts, helping to improve the lives of more than 161,000 women and girls. Through coaching, peer learning, and organizational assessments, the mentorship strengthens governance systems, accountability, and institutional resilience.

After only one quarter of implementation, the program has already shown encouraging results.

Participating organizations have improved their governance structures, clarified roles and responsibilities, and strengthened internal systems and policies. Notably, 80 percent of the organizations have obtained certificates of compliance with Rwanda's law governing non-governmental organizations.

For many participants, the mentorship has been a valuable learning journey. "The LTA mentorship program has helped reveal our organizational capacity gaps and provided a clear direction for strengthening our institutional development," says Mrs. Bellancilla Niragire, Executive Director of Réseau Culturel Sangwa.

The mentorship is also helping organizations build a culture of accountability, transparency, and continuous learning. These improvements are increasing their effectiveness, strengthening stakeholder trust, and positioning them for long-term sustainability and greater impact.

As the program continues, PFTH and its partners remain committed to strengthening women-led and women's rights organizations as key actors in advancing gender equality and creating lasting change for women and girls across Rwanda.

Turning Small Savings into Big Change: How 20 Mothers in Burera Turned 200 RWF a Week into Hope and Opportunity

In Nkoto Village, Mucaca Cell of Burera District, 20 women from vulnerable households came together with one dream: to create a better future for their families and children. They formed a self-help group called Twitezimbere Mubyeyi III.

The group was established under an eight-year, Germany-funded Child-Centred initiative implemented by Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe in four cells of Rugendabari Sector, Burera District. The initiative seeks to empower women economically, socially and politically so they can better support their children.

Nine months ago, many of these women saw little hope for improving their lives. Yet they believed that small and consistent actions could make a difference. They agreed to save just 200 RWF – at a week basis. At the very first meeting, they proudly raised 4,000 RWF in savings the first step in a journey of hope and transformation.

Small Contributions, Big Results

Week after week, the women remained committed. They took on casual jobs and other income-generating activities to strengthen their savings and grow their self-help group fund. By May 2026, their savings had reached 146,200 RWF.

767,320 RWF loans have been circulating internally among SHG members. . Their total capital had grown to 202,880 RWF.

But the group's success goes beyond the numbers. Through access to loans, members have expanded their small businesses, increased their incomes, and become more financially independent. They are now better able to provide food, school materials, and other basic needs for their children and families.

The group has also increased their life skills, namely self-confidence, social cohesion, communication, leadership, as well as mutual support. Through regular meetings, members have built stronger relationships and become more active in their community.

“Before joining the group, it was difficult to save money or find capital for my business,” one member shared. “Through our savings and loans system, I have expanded my business and can now contribute more to my family's needs.”

In less than a year, Twitezimbere Mubyeyi III has shown that when women save together, they do more than grow money, they build confidence, create opportunities, and transform the lives of their families and communities.



Through our savings and loans system, I have expanded my business and can now contribute more to my family's needs.”

Contact person

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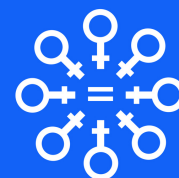
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