



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Q1 2026

January - April 2026

 Lead Access

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS



2000+
people
reached



5+
countries
reached



3M +
views on
edu videos

Strategic
collaborations



Youth
Empowerment



Women
Empowerment



A WORD FROM THE CEO...



Dear Valued Partners and Friends,

As we reflect on the past four months of 2026, I am filled with deep appreciation for the progress we have made together and the lives we continue to impact. Our shared commitment to empowering leaders at every level is not only growing, it is transforming communities in meaningful ways.

This year, our youth-focused programs have continued to open doors for young people, equipping them with the skills, mentorship, and opportunities needed to transition into the workforce with confidence. At the same time, our flagship Women in Leadership Summit & Awards, now in its third edition, has continued to spotlight and celebrate exceptional women who are shaping industries and inspiring the next generation.

We have also strengthened our partnerships with organizations through impactful trainings, retreats, and strategic engagements, supporting teams to lead more effectively, innovate boldly, and grow sustainably.

None of this would be possible without your continued trust and collaboration. Every young person empowered, every woman elevated, and every organization strengthened is a testament to what we can achieve together.

As we move into the next quarter of 2026, we are focused on scaling our impact, expanding our reach, and introducing even more innovative solutions tailored to the evolving needs of our community. Our vision remains clear, to create spaces where leadership is nurtured, potential is unlocked, and opportunity is accessible to all.

Thank you for being an integral part of this journey.

Warm regards,

Iris Irumwa

ALL PROGRAM FINANCE RETREAT

The retreat, organized for the **Mastercard Foundation**, brought together Leads and Finance Directors in a thoughtfully curated setting designed to encourage open dialogue, reflection, and meaningful exchange. Grounded in insights gathered from the recent engagement survey, the session created a safe and intentional space for participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and challenges, alongside engaging team-building activities that encouraged collaboration, energy, and connection.

By creating space for honest conversations and shared understanding, the retreat reinforced a collective commitment to continuous improvement, accountability, and building stronger, more connected ways of working across the organization.



Throughout the retreat, particular emphasis was placed on actively listening to the voices of the Leads, fostering stronger trust across teams, and collaboratively identifying practical, actionable solutions to address key constraints. This approach not only strengthened alignment between teams but also laid the foundation for more effective collaboration and sustained impact moving forward.



FEF– FORENSIQUE PROGRAM EVALUATION WITH THE FRENCH EMBASSY

The FEF-Forensique Project is a two-year project (2024–2026) supported by the French Embassy in Rwanda under the Fonds Équipe France (FEF), aimed at strengthening the link between forensic science and access to justice within the Rwandan judicial system.

Lead Access has been working closely with the French Embassy in Rwanda to conduct an evaluation of the efficiency of the FEF-Forensique Programme (2024–2026). This initiative brings together key partners including **HAGURUKA**, the Rwanda Forensic Institute (**RFI**), **CIVIPOL**, and **IRCGN**, with the aim of strengthening access to justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence while enhancing Rwanda's forensic capacity.



The programme stands out for its integrated approach, linking legal aid, psychosocial support, and forensic evidence particularly DNA analysis to support prosecutions, establish paternity, and uphold the rights of women and children. Through this evaluation, Lead Access is contributing to capturing key results, learning, and opportunities for scaling impactful, coordinated justice and forensic interventions.



MOU SIGNING WITH GMO



A strategic partnership was formalized through the signing of a 5-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the **Gender Monitoring Office** and **Lead Access**, marking a significant step toward advancing women's leadership and strengthening gender accountability in Rwanda. This collaboration will drive impactful initiatives, including support for the Women in Leadership Summit & Awards, while fostering mentorship, inclusive governance, and expanded opportunities for women across sectors.



ADVANCING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TOGETHER- RDB



As part of our continued efforts to advance women's leadership in Rwanda, our CEO, Iris Irumva, engaged in a meaningful conversation with the Chief Tourism Officer, Mrs. Irène Murerwa of the **Rwanda Development Board**. The discussion reflected a shared interest in creating more opportunities for women to grow, contribute, and lead across impactful sectors in Rwanda.

The exchange brought forward valuable insights, particularly within the tourism and conservation sectors, highlighting the importance of increasing women's participation and leadership in industries that continue to shape the country's development and visibility on a global level.

As What stood out most was the alignment in vision and the shared commitment to continued collaboration, with both institutions looking toward stronger partnerships and meaningful action that will help create lasting impact for women across these sectors



ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

A new multi-partner initiative was established in collaboration between **Lead Access**, **AGRA** and **Equity Bank Rwanda** to advance women's economic empowerment in Rwanda through intentional learning, capacity building and access to finance especially for women in agri-food systems. With support from key strategic partners including UN Women and the Government of Rwanda, the initiative aims to expand access to finance, skills, and opportunities while amplifying the impact of women driving change across communities.



BPR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



Our CEO, Iris Irumva, delivered a keynote at **Bank Populaire du Rwanda's (BPR)** International Women's Celebration, sharing a strategic perspective on leading and giving from a place of abundance while maintaining personal alignment. Her message underscored the importance of intentional leadership and self-worth, as the event fostered meaningful connections and reinforced the need to empower women to step confidently into their full potential.

BPR International Women's day



EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SPORT

Minister of Sports, Hon. Minister Nelly MUKAZAYIRE



A meaningful step forward in advancing women's empowerment through sport took place as our CEO, Iris Irumva, met with Rwanda's Minister of Sports, Hon. Nelly Mukazayire. The conversation centered on unlocking the potential of women in sports, exploring collaborative pathways to uplift and strengthen women through fitness while encouraging healthier, more balanced lifestyles.

Navigating ways to advance women empowerment through sports



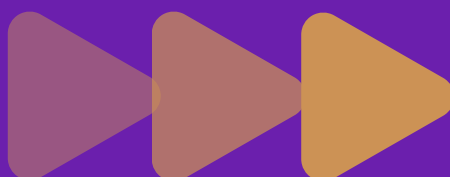
This engagement marks a significant step toward building impactful partnerships that will drive inclusion, expand opportunities, and create sustainable pathways for women in sport across Rwanda, fostering an ecosystem where women can thrive, lead, and contribute to healthier communities and long-term development.

It also highlights the importance of collaboration in creating spaces where women feel empowered to participate and excel. By aligning vision and action, such efforts can inspire the next generation of female athletes and leaders.



WILS & A

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP
SUMMIT & AWARDS



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: WELLNESS WORKSHOP

H.E Jeanette KAGAME, joined the special car free day

Celebrating International Women's Day



Minister of Sports, Hon.Min Nelly MUKAZAYIRE "WILS Wellness Day"

Stretching after an enjoyable run



Tikikel Tadele Alemu, Acting Country Representative of UN Women



WOMEN IN TECH WORKSHOP



Insightful panel discussions



'The future digital economy must be built by women, not just used by women'



Participants sticking their thoughts and inspiration on the WILS Wall



ESP GEMS EXPERIENCE

SITE VISIT DAY



Ishyo Foods Industry



Urwego Finance Headquarters



Equity Bank Headquarters

Delivered in partnership with **Ishyo Foods**, **Equity Bank Rwanda**, **Urwego Finance**, and the **Mastercard Foundation**, Lead Access, in collaboration with **ESP Rwanda**, curated the **ESP GEMS** learning experience. This initiative was intentionally designed to expand access and exposure for 10 women entrepreneurs from upcountry by connecting them to Kigali's business ecosystem and high-level leadership platforms, including participation in the Women in Leadership Summit & Awards.

Through immersive site visits, curated engagements, and targeted learning moments, participants interacted with industry leaders, explored diverse business models, and gained practical insights into navigating competitive markets. These experiences enabled them to build meaningful networks, strengthen their confidence, think more strategically, and position themselves for greater growth and opportunity.

SCAN HERE TO VIEW EXPERIENCE



ESP GEMS AT WILS

Agri-Food systems workshop



WILS SUMMIT



RED CARPET MOMENTS



As part of this journey, participants were given the opportunity to attend key WILS events, including the Agri-food Systems Workshop and the Summit & Awards. These platforms created space for learning, visibility, and deeper engagement with critical conversations shaping the future of the sector.

A standout highlight of the experience was the participation of one of the ESP GEMS as a panelist during the Agrifood Systems Workshop, reflecting the program's commitment not only to exposure, but to actively positioning women as voices and leaders within the industry. This moment embodied the shift from participation to representation.

Altogether, the experience fostered a strong environment for growth, confidence, and connection, reinforcing the importance of creating spaces where women are not only present, but empowered to contribute and lead.

Lead Access and the ESP GEMS on the red carpet at the WILS 2026 Awards Gala



WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP WORKSHOP WITH BPN



The Women in Entrepreneurship Workshop was successfully delivered in partnership with **BPN Rwanda** in Kirehe District, convening women entrepreneurs from Mahama Refugee Camp and the surrounding community. The session focused on practical learning, peer exchange, and strengthening core business development skills. Through a blend of targeted discussions and hands-on sessions, participants gained actionable tools and increased confidence to advance their entrepreneurial journeys. The workshop also fostered a collaborative environment that enabled meaningful connections, knowledge-sharing, and enhanced capacity to build and sustain resilient businesses.

Keynote speech delivered by the Mayor of Kirehe, Hon. Mayor Bruno Rangira.



Empowering women to embrace careers on and off the court



Lead Access x BPN Team

The workshop resulted in strengthened entrepreneurial capacity among participants, with women gaining practical skills, increased confidence, and clearer pathways to grow their businesses. It also fostered meaningful connections between entrepreneurs from Mahama Refugee Camp and the host community, reinforcing collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and the foundation for more resilient and sustainable enterprises.



AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS WORKSHOP

Over 300 women participated



Through a strong strategic collaboration with partners including **AGRA**, the Agri-Food Systems Workshop brought together over 300 participants for knowledge-sharing, networking, and collaboration. The convening created a dynamic space to explore innovative approaches to agriculture, value addition, and sustainable food systems, while equipping participants with practical insights to grow their ventures and careers and strengthening connections that will support continued collaboration and impact across the sector.

The Minister of State of Agriculture, Hon. Minister Solange UWITUJE visiting the exhibition



Break out sessions



Through engaging discussions, exhibitions, and expert-led sessions, participants were equipped with the tools and confidence to drive change within their communities and contribute to a more resilient and inclusive agri-food ecosystem. The sessions also fostered meaningful connections and encouraged the exchange of practical insights across the sector.

As a result, participants left with strengthened capacity and a renewed sense of purpose to implement sustainable solutions.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP SUMMIT AND AWARDS

Umutoni Gatsinzi Nadine, Chief Gender Monitor



Nanna Sylla Coulibaly

Ivy Wanjiru



CEO Panel discussion

CEO PANEL DISCUSSION

The Untold Stories Behind Women in Leadership



Fiery Debate



Men As Allies Panel



The 3rd edition of the Women in Leadership Summit and Awards brought together over 200 women from diverse sectors and all levels for a dynamic and thought-provoking experience centered on learning, connection, and growth. The event created a powerful platform for networking, shared experiences, and recognizing outstanding achievements, while continuing to inspire women to take bold steps in leadership and advance their impact across sectors.

With impactful discussions and interactive sessions, participants gained practical insights while building meaningful connections. The summit also strengthened mentorship and collaboration among women committed to driving change.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP SUMMIT & AWARDS

Meet the 45 nominees



The Awards Gala served as a powerful moment of recognition, honoring **45 outstanding women trailblazers** whose leadership and contributions continue to shape communities, industries, and institutions across Rwanda and beyond. Among them, **15 women** were presented with awards in recognition of their outstanding impact and achievements across their respective categories. The evening also created a meaningful space for celebration, connection, and shared experiences, reinforcing the importance of visibility, representation, and women's leadership across all sectors.

The night concluded with a renewed commitment to empowering women leaders at all levels while continuing to inspire bold leadership and celebrate excellence.

The WILS 2026 Trailblazers



Boukuru's magical performance



Keynote speech by Fatmata Lovetta Sesay



Celebrating Award recipients



MENTOR-HER PROGRAM

The Mentor-Her Program kicked off the year with two online sessions in the first quarter, building on its first cohort implemented from May 2025 to February 2026, where monthly expert-led sessions covered a range of learning topics tailored to different participant categories, including **employed professionals, job seekers, students, and entrepreneurs**. Through targeted guidance and interactive discussions, participants gained practical skills, navigated the job market, and unlocked new opportunities, supporting their transition into the workforce and growth as the next generation of leaders.



100+ young women reached



3 Countries reached

Topics Covered

From Vision to Execution:
Designing a Year That Delivers

AI Fluency & Digital Efficiency:
Working Smarter in the Age of AI

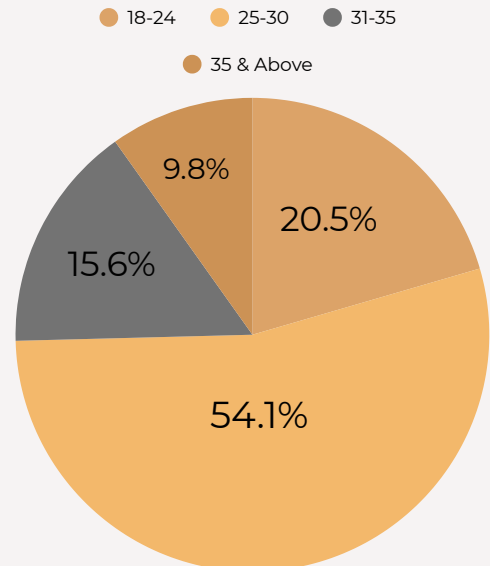
Personal Branding & Strategic
Visibility: Be Seen. Be Chosen.

Career Growth & Positioning:
Owning Your Path with
Confidence

Strategic Networking: Building
Meaningful & Powerful
Connections

Productivity & Discipline: Systems

Participation Age Breakdown



TESTIMONIALS



Charity Kabango
Co-founder, ESP

"It was a great collaboration and the preliminary feedback from our GEMS (the real ones that matter) has been wonderful!

Thanks for co-creating such a meaningful experience for them."



Sharon Akanyana
Founder, Ishyo Foods

"Participating in the WILS award as a nominee for the Visionary Entrepreneur category was an incredibly rewarding experience for Ishyo Foods Ltd. While we did not take home the trophy, the recognition alone brought valuable visibility and credibility to our brand, generating positive publicity and sparking meaningful conversations with industry peers and potential partners. Being shortlisted among such accomplished entrepreneurs was both an honor and a powerful validation of our vision, and the exposure has already opened doors for new opportunities that will help us grow and scale our impact."



Vanessa Ngarambe
WILS 2026 award winner

"After winning this year's Leading Light in Education award, I felt truly empowered by the work I do, and it pushed me to aim even higher.

That night, I remembered the 17-year-old girl who was so passionate about autism, so curious, and so eager to understand a world that many people overlooked. If I could go back and speak to her today, I would tell her, 'Hold on to that passion, it will become your purpose.'

I am so grateful to Iris and the entire WILS team for reminding me that my work matters and for giving me a platform that brought visibility to the cause I care so deeply about."



Earlyne Igiraneza
Mentee

"I joined the mentorship program inspired by Iris Irumva, whose insights I had been following and learning from. The journey has been truly transformative...each session felt like breaking through fears and gaining clarity. I developed skills in strategic networking and negotiation, while also shifting my mindset about my worth as a woman entrepreneur and letting go of fear of judgment. I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn from accomplished professionals, and attending the WILSA event elevated my perspective even further."



EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER



Sharon Mbabazi

**Admin & Training
Associate**

“I’m truly grateful for the opportunity to be part of Lead Access. In the few months I’ve been here, I’ve experienced radical growth. I can confidently say I am already 80% better than when I joined. The level of intentionality and attention to detail in everything we do is remarkable, and excellence in service is truly at the heart of this organization. I’m proud to be part of such a committed and inspiring A team.”

BE A PART OF OUR JOURNEY

Upcoming Event



Rwanda



March 2027

Women In Leadership Summit and Awards 2027

We are amplifying our impact:

- Expanding from 200 to 1,000+ women
- From 1 day workshop to workshop rallies
- Focused workshops tailored to specific industries
- Grand Finale: Awards Ceremony Honouring 45 trailblazers across 15 fields.

Let's Build the Future Together!

Have questions, want to partner with us, or ready to be part of this transformative journey? We're here to connect, collaborate, and empower.

Reach out today, and let's create a future where empowered women lead, inspire, and transform the world.

Join our esteemed partners:



info@leadaccessnow.com



www.wilsafrica.com/#partner

2026 TRAINING CALENDAR

 Rwanda

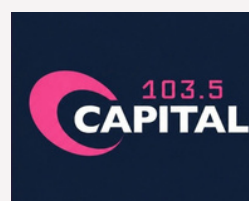
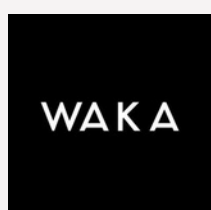
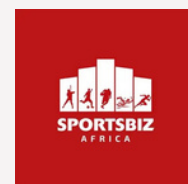
 May-Dec 2026

The 2026 Training Calendar is thoughtfully designed to support continuous growth and practical development throughout the year. With a structured and well-paced approach, it creates space for participants to build confidence, strengthen their capabilities, and apply what they learn in real-world settings. More than a schedule, it represents a consistent commitment to empowering individuals to adapt, perform, and thrive in evolving professional environments.

TOPICS	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Effective Communication & Teamwork								
Time Management & Productivity								
Career Development & Negotiation Skills								
Digital Skills for the Workplace								
Effective Communication & Teamwork								
Workplace Adaptability & Resilience								



THANK YOU FOR PARTNERING WITH US





THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING US!

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