Rukundo
INTERNATIONAL

Strategic Plan
2025 – 2029

Approved by the

Board of Directors

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I. Rukundo International

The word "rukundo" means love in the native language, Rukiga.

Rukundo International (RI) is a grassroots nonprofit with an all-volunteer staff in the United States, dedicated to empowering Kabale, Uganda's most vulnerable populations through education and economic opportunities. RI creates pathways for children and families to reach their full potential while building self-sustaining communities. Through education, outreach, and advocacy, RI creates opportunities for partners and supporters in the U.S. to connect with Ugandans, fostering global awareness, meaningful relationships, and a deeper understanding of our shared world.

Our Mission

Empower Kabale, Uganda's most vulnerable populations through educational and economic opportunities that create pathways to self-sustaining communities.

Our Vision

A Uganda where all children reach their full potential.

Our Values

- Act with integrity and be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us
- Engage with humility and cultural sensitivity in partnership with selected Ugandan communities
- Work with steadfast commitment and perseverance toward our mission and vision
- Invite honest communication and grow stronger through incorporating diverse ideas and opinions
- Value love, compassion, and community above all else

Our Impact

- 226 students enrolled in the Rukundo Preparatory School
- 1,740 girls graduated from the Girls Empowerment Program
- 77 students participated in the Scholars Program
- 21 women graduated from the Women's Agricultural Cooperative
- 263 children regularly engaged in our weekly Community Center programs
- 306,981 nutrient-rich and balanced meals served

II. Background

a. Uganda, Africa

Uganda, located in East-Central Africa, along the shore of Lake Victoria, is one of the most populous countries in Africa, home to almost 49 million people (World Bank Group, Population). Uganda has the second youngest population in the world (The CIA World Fact Book, 2023). Despite having a relatively stable economy, it is in league with, and even surpassed by failed states such as DR Congo, Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Yemen (Fragile States Index, 2023). A staggering 44% of the population is under the age of 14, and the median age for the entire country is 16.7 years old (UNICEF, 2023).

Lack of access to clean water, a high prevalence of HIV, and an elevated quota of fatal malaria and AIDS cases, along with a lack of access to healthcare have contributed to Uganda reporting one of the lowest life expectancies in the world (World Health Organization, 2024), as well as a devastatingly high infant mortality rate. These factors have left the Ugandan government struggling to support its youth. Most estimates place the number of orphans in Uganda at 2.5 million (UNICEF, 2023). This number includes both single and double orphans and represents close to an astonishing ~5% of the total population. Uganda has one of the highest levels of malnutrition in East Africa, whereby about 29% or 3 in 10 children below 5 years of age are stunted, while about 3.5% of all children below 5 years of age in Uganda face severe malnutrition in what is considered "body wasting" (World Food Programme, 2024).

While the Ugandan government has made some improvements to lower the rate of poverty, increase the quality of educational programs, and create better access for families, these efforts have fallen short of meeting basic needs, particularly in small, rural communities. Despite substantial improvements in more urban areas, the most recent study on poverty in Uganda showed about 42% of Ugandans were in poverty in 2019 (a decrease of only 1% since 2012-2013 (World Bank Group, Poverty). This has been driven by shocks in recent years which have disproportionately affected Uganda's poor and rural residents. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to one of the longest school closures in the world (Atzatzev, 2021), severely exacerbated these challenges, leaving the poor and rural communities even more vulnerable and pushing many closer to the brink of poverty. Given the limited amount of social assistance available, it was also found that the poor have been forced to use detrimental coping strategies (such as reducing food consumption) and that ~50% of the population are at-risk of falling into poverty in coming years (World Bank Group, 2023).

b. Role of Rukundo International

Founded in January 2014, Rukundo International's goal is to empower women and children in Kabale, Uganda, acting as a partner and advocate, to ensure they have the basic human resources necessary to reach their full potential and to be successful.

Rukundo International is currently partnered with Kyanamira subcounty – a small, rural community in Kabale District of Southwest Uganda – to create holistic, sustainable programs that provide opportunities for education, nutrition, hygiene, social development, and economic success.

Working collaboratively with local government officials, community leaders, and the people of Kyanamira, Rukundo International helps orphans, financially distressed families, and at-risk youth within the community. Rukundo International works to create a healthy educational environment that supports the development of the whole child: intellectually, emotionally, socially, and physically.

III. Our Programs

a. Rukundo Preparatory School

Program Overview:

Rukundo Preparatory School (RPS) provides a nurturing educational environment that fosters the holistic development of children—intellectually, emotionally, socially, and physically. Initially focused on establishing the school and developing a robust nursery program, RPS prioritizes early intervention to positively impact young children's lives.

School Structure:

RPS features eight classrooms, starting with Baby Nursery Class (3 years old) and progressing through Primary Five (P5). The progression includes Middle Nursery Class (4 years old), Top Nursery Class (5 years old), and Primary One (P1) through Primary Five (P5). This structure ensures students receive a strong educational foundation. The school's mission, "to create world-changers through the power of high-quality education, love in action, and humble service," is realized through small class sizes, a high-quality curriculum, and exceptional instruction from qualified teachers.

Nutrition Program:

Two on-campus gardens contribute to providing students with two nutritious meals daily, addressing critical nutritional needs and supporting their physical development.

Impact:

After seven years of operation, RPS boasts a 91% retention rate and a 99% graduation rate. Attendance rates are 93% for Baby Class and 96% for students ages four and older. Upon enrollment, 4.5% of students were under height and 2.3% were underweight for their age, as defined by WHO International Child Growth Standards. After 16 months at RPS, all students achieved normal height and weight for their age.

b. Amaani Gabato "The Power of Kids" Community Program

Program Overview:

The Amaani Gabato Community Program, launched in early 2018, operates on Sundays as a community center for primary (elementary) school-aged children in the Kyanamira community. The program provides a safe, nurturing space where children can play games, participate in educational lessons, receive physical nourishment, and openly discuss their concerns.

Program Components:

Amaani Gabato emphasizes teaching valuable life skills and introducing income-generating activities, equipping children with tools to build a brighter future. Beyond these developmental activities, the program ensures children have a dedicated space to simply be kids, fostering joy and support in their childhood experiences.

Impact:

Every child who attends the program is provided a nutritious meal. During its inaugural year, an average of 101 children participated weekly. By 2024, participation increased by 160%, with 263 children attending regularly, and 42,244 lifetime meals served. Staff have observed numerous positive behavioral changes among participants since the

program's inception, including increased school enrollment, improved attentiveness, enhanced peer-to-peer interactions, and more timely reporting.

c. Girls Empowerment Program

Program Overview:

This program equips female Ugandan youth enrolled in Primary grade 5 with essential life skills and knowledge through an activity-based curriculum rooted in soccer language and cultural analogies. This approach fosters healthy, responsible behaviors, with a strong focus on reproductive health, life skills, HIV prevention, unplanned pregnancy, and STD prevention. By leveraging the power of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilize, the program encourages girls to share what they have learned with peers, families, and communities, amplifying efforts to reduce the spread of HIV.

Program Components:

The girls' program integrates a financial literacy and entrepreneurial training component, supported by an annual grant from the Women's Microfinance Initiative (WMI). Participants receive small microloans to start home-based entrepreneurial projects, beginning with growing beans and progressing to other crops, crafts, and livestock ventures. This initiative empowers girls to adopt sound financial practices early in life.

Impact:

The program currently serves nearly 63 girls across four rural primary schools in Kyanamira, Uganda: Kyanamira, Rubira, Nyabushabi, and Rukundo Primary Schools. Coaches and senior teachers have reported significant positive changes in participants, including improved academic performance, critical thinking, and teaching skills. Notably, none of the enrolled girls became pregnant during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns, despite substantially increased pregnancy rates nationwide. Early marriage rates among participants were also significantly reduced.

Entrepreneurial Outcomes:

Through the entrepreneurial curriculum, girls gain skills in growing crops and rearing animals, enabling them to sell products to pay school fees and purchase essential items, such as school supplies, that rural families often struggle to afford. Each participant receives two years of coaching to develop and sustain her projects. A one-year post-graduation evaluation of the 2023 cohort revealed that 80% (33 out of 41) of the girls enrolled in partner schools successfully maintained their projects. Among these 33 girls, 32 (97%) own livestock. However, 10 girls from the 2023 cohort could not be included in the follow-up due to transferring to other schools or moving away.

For the 2022 cohort, two years post-graduation, 82% of the microbusinesses remained active among girls who are still enrolled in partner schools. Specifically, 31 out of 38 girls

continued to sustain their initiatives, with 28 (90%) owning livestock. The primary reason cited for girls not maintaining projects was theft. Additionally, 15 girls from the 2022 cohort could not be followed up on due to dropping out or transferring to other schools.

Menstrual Health Initiative:

Adolescent girls in rural Uganda often miss up to 24 days of school annually due to a lack of access to sanitary products, which equates to approximately 11% of total learning days. This absence can lead to higher dropout rates as girls struggle to catch up on missed work. From 2016 to 2018, every menstruating graduate of the program received an AFRIpad menstrual kit, which provided reusable protection for over 12 months. Since 2019, the program has evolved to train enrolled girls to make their own reusable sanitary pads, promoting improved school attendance and reducing dropout rates.

d. Scholars Program

Program Overview:

The Scholars Program provides scholarships to students from rural areas who face financial hardships, ensuring they can continue their education. This program addresses the educational, physical, social, and emotional needs of its participants, offering a holistic approach to student development.

Program Components:

Scholars receive comprehensive support, including specialized training, mentorship, and guidance from a team of skilled professionals such as counselors, social workers, and dedicated mentors. Students are also encouraged to complete at least one community service project per year to foster a sense of community involvement and responsibility.

The program promotes healthy home environments by providing support to caregivers and offering supplemental care, such as school supplies and medical assistance, on a case-by-case basis. Educational progress is closely monitored to ensure each student thrives academically and personally.

Impact:

Students in the Scholars Program consistently demonstrate better home environments, improved academic performance, reduced medical visits, and higher graduation rates. The program’s multifaceted support system has empowered 77 students to achieve their educational goals and contribute positively to their communities.

e. Women’s Cooperative

Program Overview:

Launched in October 2019, the Women’s Cooperative empowers women in the Kyanamira community by fostering economic growth, food security, and resilience. Each woman in the cooperative received a female goat, laying the foundation for sustainable livelihoods in this agricultural region. Goats provide supplementary income, enhance nutrition, and offer manure for gardens—an invaluable resource for local farmers. They are low-cost to maintain, reproduce quickly, and thrive on local vegetation, making them an ideal asset.

Program Components:

The cooperative operates on a sustainable model that strengthens community bonds. Each recipient returns the goat’s second and fourth offspring to Rukundo International, ensuring the program’s longevity and sustainability. The first round of returned goats funds program monitoring and supplies, while the second round is distributed to other women in need, perpetuating the cycle of support. After raising seven offspring, recipients gain full ownership of their goats, graduating to self-sufficiency.

Beyond goat-rearing, cooperative members are trained in additional income-generating skills, such as mushroom cultivation, gardening, and soap-making, enabling them to diversify their sources of income and create lasting change in their communities.

Impact:

Since the program's inception, 234 goats have been raised, and 21 women have graduated, each feeling empowered to positively impact their community. Graduates, on average, now own four goats, significantly enhancing their self-reliance and household income. This initiative has not only provided economic benefits but also fostered a sense of independence and community among participants.

IV. Our Achievements

Ten-Year Successful Track Record

Rukundo International has demonstrated a ten-year successful track record for creating sustainable programs in southwestern Uganda. To date, Rukundo International has installed four clean water tanks; built a nursery school; constructed the primary one through primary five classrooms; launched a community center; funded girls' and boys' educational and sports programming; sponsored students through scholarships; and started a women’s agricultural work program.

From 2014 to 2024 donations were used to complete the following key accomplishments:

Established the organization:

- Rukundo International was certified as a Community-Based Organization (CBO) in Kabale, Uganda in 2014 and recognized as a 501(c)3 organization in the USA.
- In 2019 it was certified as a national Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Uganda.
- We have cultivated strong partnerships with key stakeholders, including the Ugandan local government, community members, parents, and leaders. Through close collaboration with the District Education Office and the District Inspectorate of Schools, we ensure that our educational initiatives align seamlessly with Ugandan standards and regulations.

Launched the Scholars Program:

- The Scholars Program began in 2014 by providing school fees and supplies to five vulnerable students to support their education in primary, secondary, or vocational schools.
- The Junior Scholars Program was launched in 2018 and accepted 20 students on full or partial scholarships at Rukundo Preparatory School.
- In 2024, we supported 53 total Scholars, of whom 28 junior scholars were at Rukundo's nursery and primary schools and 25 scholars were in other outside schools. 13 scholars have successfully graduated from the program.

Launched the Girls Empowerment Program:

- The Girls Empowerment Program began in 2014 in one pilot school by training coaches and senior teachers.
- In 2017, 12 teachers from six different schools were trained to serve as coaches for the Girls Empowerment Program.
- By 2024 we had graduated 1,740 girls from the program across 16 primary schools.

Constructed the Rukundo Preparatory School from the ground up:

- 2015-2016: Purchased approximately 1.25 acres of land for the school.
- 2017: Constructed Rukundo Nursery School, bathrooms, a temporary kitchen, and fencing. Hired 3 teachers and a head teacher.
- 2018: Enrolled 56 students in the nursery school, graduating 100% to the next level.
- 2019: Completed Primary 1 & 2 classrooms, educated 108 students, and purchased land for a playground.
- 2020: Conducted 1,161 homeschool visits, built a classroom, 3 offices, and 2 staff bathrooms; maintained enrollment at 136 during the pandemic.
- 2021: Conducted 1,599 homeschool visits, completed 2 floors of masonry work, and maintained enrollment at 136.
- 2022-2024: Enrollment grew steadily to 182 (2022), 206 (2023), and 226 (2024).

Launched a Women's Cooperative:

- Launched in 2017 with 22 women selected to participate.
- Provided training for establishing and managing the Women's Mushroom-Growing Cooperative by 2019.
- Received goats as part of the program in October 2019.
- 21 women graduated from the program in December 2023.

Provided support to the community:

- 2014-2016: Installed rainwater tanks at local primary schools, including a 500L tank at Kibuzigye Primary School (benefitting 800), a 5,000L tank at Kagarama Primary School (640), and two 10,000L tanks at Kacerere and Future Generation Primary Schools (1,500+).
- 2018-2024: Launched & grew the Amaani Gabato "The Power of Kids" Community Program with weekly attendance growing from 100+ to 263.
- 2014-2019: Expanded Boys Soccer Program, reaching tournament quarter-finals in 2017.
- Ongoing: Provided free medical clinics, hygiene/nutrition workshops, and emergency food aid, including 892 kg (1,967 pounds) of beans for 1,000 community members and food packages for 100 vulnerable families during COVID-19.

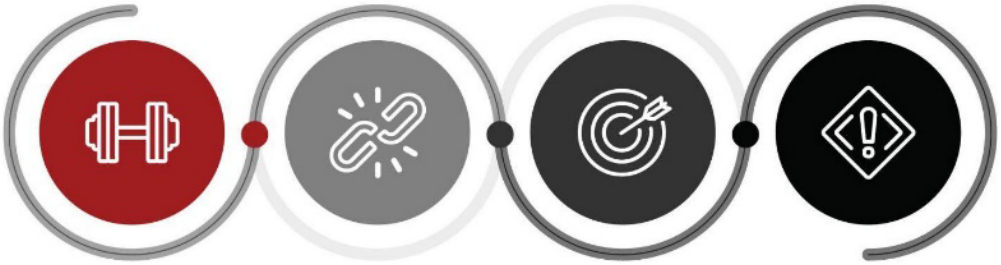
Grew our donor base and financial support:

- Total donations grew threefold from $48,728 in 2014 to $186,431 in 2023.
- We received our first grant from the Women's Microfinance Initiative (WMI) in 2015, which has supported the training of teachers/coaches for the Girls Empowerment Program ever since.
- Journey's Crossing Church began supporting our Kid's Sunday program through an annual grant, beginning in 2023.
- 139 recurring donors contribute $100,000 annually, with $45,000 in unrestricted funds.
- 60% of these donors have supported us for over five years.

V. SWOT Analysis

To guide our strategic planning process and goals, Rukundo conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Rukundo operates within a dynamic environment that presents both challenges and opportunities. Our strong track record in building and expanding Rukundo Preparatory School, coupled with high-quality programs, exceptional graduation and nutrition rates, and strong community support in Uganda, positions us as a trusted and impactful organization. Our grassroots donor base further bolsters our stability. However, we face internal challenges, including limited board engagement, a need to diversify funding sources, and high volunteer turnover. Externally, systemic corruption in Uganda and

competition for donors' time and resources pose ongoing threats. Despite these challenges, we are well-positioned to capitalize on high demand for our services in rural Uganda, untapped donor networks beyond Maryland and the Founder's connections, and opportunities to enhance partnerships and secure grant funding. Strengthening volunteer management and improving engagement across both U.S. and Ugandan teams will also drive organizational growth and resilience. By addressing our weaknesses and mitigating threats, we can build on our successes to achieve sustainable impact. The SWOT analysis, presented in the table below, provided a solid framework for prioritizing the goals outlined in the following section.



STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Strong track record of successfully building school and growing enrollment • High quality programs and strong delivery • Strong graduation, nutrition, and satisfaction rates • Low administrative costs • Strong community support in Uganda • Strong grassroots donor base	• Board has limited engagement • Not expanding new funding sources • High volunteer turnover • Cultural tendency to avoid proactive effort in critical thinking and execution • Low awareness of service value among low-education rural audience	• High Demand for our services in the rural area RI serves • Untapped donors outside MD (headquarter area) and Founder's personal network • Partnerships in Uganda largely underdeveloped • Improve U.S. volunteer management and engagement • Apply for grant and foundation funding	• In Uganda, widespread systemic corruption and dishonest practices disrupt effectiveness • Competition for supporters' time and donations • Overreliance on Founder for funding, knowledge, and leadership

VI. Our Strategic Goals for 2025 – 2029

As we complete our tenth year of operation, the development of this strategic plan will guide our steps for the next five years and create a framework for sustainability, growth, and continued success.

Goal 1: Invigorate and Expand Uganda Programs

Strategy 1.1: Expand and enhance school programs

Over the next two years, our main goals are to expand our school by adding one classroom per year, culminating in a full primary school through Grade 7. Specifically, we plan to add P6 in 2025 and P7 in 2026. Additionally, we are developing a plan to introduce a boarding residency and a busing service for students who live too far away to attend. Rukundo Preparatory School

strives to enhance its high-quality, multi-disciplinary approach to education in Uganda, providing holistic learning opportunities while fostering community engagement and supporting local economic growth.

Actions:

- Raise sufficient funds and execute construction plans to build one new classroom each year.
- Develop funding and operational plans for:
    - A boarding residency
    - A busing program
    - Establishing a library
    - Establishing a computer lab
    - Establishing a boarding section

Measures of Success:

- 100% completion of annual phased construction plans.
- Establishment of a library and computer lab by the end of 2025.
- Completion of a new bathroom block by the end of 2026.
- Enrollment of 25 new nursery students each year.
- 98% of students progress to the next grade level.
- 90% satisfaction across all categories as measured by parent satisfaction surveys.

Strategy 1.2: Improve the health and well-being of the children in our programs

Our primary focus is to maintain the health and well-being of children within our school programs, ensuring the continued success of our established initiatives. Rukundo remains committed to providing two nutritious meals to students daily, supporting their physical development and overall well-being.

We will continue to monitor attendance and health metrics, prioritizing the maintenance of anthropometric indicators within WHO Growth Standards through bi-annual preventative health screenings for all students. Additionally, we provide supplementary counseling to support students facing challenging personal circumstances and offer physiotherapy services to a small number of students with disabilities. For students with cancer and other illnesses, we offer supplementary medical support programs, ensuring that every child receives the care and resources needed to thrive.

Actions:

- Conduct bi-annual preventative healthcare screenings for all students, ensuring comprehensive monitoring of health and development.
- Implement individualized care plans for students scoring outside of normal anthropometric indicators to address growth and nutritional needs effectively.

- Develop and implement a counseling and psychosocial support program tailored to children requiring extra assistance, such as slow learners, those with learning disabilities, trauma survivors, and students with behavioral disorders.
- Provide physiotherapy support for students with disabilities to enhance their physical development and well-being.

Measures of Success:

- Achieve a 90% attendance rate for the Nursery (3-year-old) class and a 95% attendance rate for all other classes.
- Maintain 95% of students within WHO Child Growth Standards two years post-enrollment.
- Ensure 100% of students scoring outside of normal anthropometric indicators receive targeted support to improve their outcomes.

Contextual Challenges and New Baselines:

Due to the nearly two-year school closures (approximately 22 months), there are gaps in health and attendance data, creating the need for new baselines. Our current efforts focus on re-establishing these benchmarks and addressing the long-term impacts of interrupted schooling. By prioritizing consistent monitoring and targeted interventions, we aim to regain lost momentum and continue delivering measurable improvements in student health and well-being.

Strategy 1.3: Facilitate & maintain education and empowerment opportunities for young girls and boys within the community

Over the next three years, Rukundo International aims to enhance support for girls through the Girls Empowerment Program while broadening the impact of its programs on vulnerable children in the community, including Amaani Gabato and our Scholars program. By equipping youth with essential life skills, financial literacy, and educational opportunities, we strive to empower the next generation to achieve success and self-sufficiency.

Actions:

Girls Empowerment Program

- Deliver interactive and diverse lesson plans that prioritize prevention-focused life skills education. These activities are designed to build self-esteem, promote healthy decision-making, encourage school attendance, and equip girls with the knowledge to avoid risks such as HIV, early pregnancy, and child marriage.
- Provide entrepreneurship training that offers practical income-generating skills such as agriculture, sewing, baking, and crafting. By fostering economic independence, the program helps adolescent girls reduce their vulnerability to early marriage and other high-risk situations.
- Maintain a robust monitoring and evaluation plan, including pre and post-program surveys to assess learning outcomes and termly visits to monitor progress and address challenges.

Amaani Gabato "The Power of Kids" Community Program

- Ensure the program remains accessible to primary school-aged boys and girls, maintaining weekly participation averages of 200+ children.
- Deliver diverse lesson plans that incorporate games and activities designed to build life skills and instill values such as socialization, self-esteem, creative thinking, good hygiene, moral development, school attendance, cultural awareness, and problem-solving
- Conduct monthly skills-building workshops on practical income-generating activities, such as chapati and rolex-making and creating local crafts. These workshops provide a path to earning income for children unable to continue formal education.

Scholars Program

- Provide scholarships to vulnerable children unlikely to continue their education without financial assistance, covering primary, secondary, and vocational schooling.
- Conduct termly visits to scholars outside Rukundo schools to monitor academic performance and address challenges.

Measures of Success:

Girls Empowerment Program:

- 90% of participants demonstrate significant new knowledge in health and financial literacy, as measured by pre and post-program surveys.
- Achieve a 95% attendance rate for girls in empowerment classes.
- 75% of enrollees continue entrepreneurship projects one year post-graduation, and 60% maintain these projects two years post-graduation.

Amaani Gabato Community Program:

- Maintain a weekly attendance average of 200+ children.

Scholars Program:

- 100% of scholars perform above the 50th percentile for their school year.
- 100% of scholars graduate to the next grade level annually.
- 100% of graduate scholars secure employment within one year of graduation.

Impact:

Through these initiatives, Rukundo International continues to provide critical educational opportunities, life skills, and financial literacy training to vulnerable youth, equipping them to build brighter futures. By prioritizing robust monitoring and evaluation, we ensure that every student receives tailored support to thrive academically and personally.

Goal 2: Revitalize and Streamline Uganda Operations

Strategy 2.1: Maintain a strong, dedicated, and well-trained workforce and work culture

The Uganda board, staff, and team members are the backbone of Rukundo International, ensuring the successful implementation and facilitation of all programs. They serve as the organization's first point of contact with Ugandan government officials and the communities we serve, embodying the mission, vision, and values of Rukundo International.

A key strategy of this plan is to sustain a dedicated and motivated team that upholds the organization's values and contributes to its long-term success. To achieve this, we prioritize fostering a positive work culture, maintaining adherence to RI's mission, vision, and values, and providing clear policies, procedures, and consistent oversight.

Actions:

Team Development

- Annually review and update job descriptions to ensure role clarity and alignment with organizational goals.
- Provide termly (3x/year) professional skills development training to address gaps and strengthen team capabilities.
- Host an annual staff retreat and monthly social events to foster team cohesion and morale.

Employee Engagement and Recognition

- Conduct quarterly employee engagement surveys to assess satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.
- Implement an employee recognition program to celebrate staff who exemplify RI values and outstanding performance.
- Hold monthly staff meetings to track goals, address challenges, and reinforce RI's mission, vision, and values.

Measures of Success:

- 100% of Uganda-based positions are filled within 90 days of vacancy.
- 75% employee retention rate for two or more years in Uganda programs and operations.
- 100% of staff complete scheduled training outlined in the annual training plan.
- 90% of employees report positive engagement levels on the quarterly survey.

Impact:

By cultivating a positive work culture, prioritizing professional development, and ensuring alignment with RI's mission and values, we aim to empower our Uganda team to thrive both personally and professionally. This approach fosters a motivated and dedicated workforce, essential for the long-term success of Rukundo International's programs and initiatives.

Strategy 2.2: Inspire Community Members and Increase Stakeholder Engagement

An inspired and engaged community is vital to the success of Rukundo International's programs, fostering a sense of partnership and shared investment. We actively involve parents, community members, local Ugandans, and key stakeholders—including the Catholic Diocese, PTAs, and partner organizations—as integral participants in our mission. Their insights, influence, and active involvement are invaluable to sustaining and expanding our programs.

As part of our commitment to community engagement, we offer free resources and services each year, including training on topics such as nutrition and disease prevention, as well as an annual free medical clinic. These initiatives demonstrate our dedication to the well-being of the communities we serve, strengthening trust and partnership. A robust plan to engage and inspire the community as stakeholders remains a cornerstone of this strategy.

Actions:

- Develop an annual outreach plan to strengthen partnerships with local individuals, government officials, NGOs, and community leaders, increasing awareness of RI's mission.
- Organize an Annual General Meeting and develop a calendar of community events, including a service project, to foster engagement.
- Enhance program marketing materials tailored to a Ugandan audience to improve communication and participation.
- Disseminate quarterly reports to stakeholders, including NGO boards, dioceses, partner schools, local churches, parents, and service providers, ensuring transparency and building trust.

Measures of Success:

- 100% of quarterly reports submitted on time to all relevant stakeholders.
- 95% attendance at PTA Executive, School Management Committee, and Girls Empowerment Program (GEP) stakeholder meetings.
- Increased parental and community engagement:
    - 70% of parents attending GEP meetings.
    - 50% of parents participating in AG celebrations.
    - 90% parent attendance at PTA meetings.
    - Community trainings: 100 people in attendance, with 20% having no direct affiliation with RI programs.
    - Medical camp: 150 people seen, with 20% having no direct affiliation with RI programs.

Impact:

By strengthening relationships with stakeholders and fostering community engagement, Rukundo International ensures that programs are not only sustainable but deeply rooted in local support. The addition of a Partnerships Coordinator further enhances these efforts, enabling stronger connections with parents, PTAs, dioceses, and other key collaborators, ensuring our mission resonates throughout the communities we serve.

Strategy 2.3: Institute Internal Controls and Annual Monitoring Programs

As part of strengthening Uganda operations, we are focused on the continued growth and refinement of internal control procedures and the active monitoring of programs. This ongoing strategy includes enhancing existing policies and procedures with input from Uganda staff, expanding self-monitoring and reporting processes, and increasing auditing and oversight efforts conducted by the U.S. Board and staff.

Actions:

- Annually review, revise, and formalize policies and procedures.
- Review quarterly and analyze departmental work plans (including KPIs, data management, etc.) and budgets, with annual revisions as needed.
- Conduct annual performance evaluations for all employees.
- Conduct independent annual audits.
- Hold weekly meetings with department heads to track progress on weekly plans and ensure alignment with overall work plans.

Measures of Success:

- 85% of employees understand and meet performance expectations
- 100% of RI's programs meet project management requirements
- 100% of data collected for departmental work plans, annually

Goal 3: Restructure and Elevate U.S. Operations

Strategy 3.1: Develop and Execute a New Organizational Structure

To enhance U.S. operations, we are focused on refining and improving the formal organizational structure established in recent years. This ongoing effort involves further clarifying roles and responsibilities, strengthening empowerment and accountability, and optimizing the management of workloads and resources. These refinements aim to foster a culture of continuous collaboration and innovation, ensuring the structure evolves to meet the organization's growing needs over the next five years.

Actions:

- Maintain a Comprehensive Organizational Chart: Annually review and update the detailed chart outlining all roles, reporting lines, and responsibilities to ensure alignment with organizational goals and evolving needs.
- Conduct Role and Responsibility Reviews: Review and revise the roles and responsibilities document annually, starting in 2026.
- Recruit for Key Positions: Advertise and fill critical roles to ensure the organization has the necessary expertise and leadership in place.

Measures of Success:

- Position Fulfillment: Achieve 50% of key positions filled and transitioned by December 2025, 75% by December 2026, and 100% by December 2027.

Strategy 3.2: Transform the U.S. Board of Directors

Revitalizing the U.S. Board of Directors is crucial for enhancing its role in advising, fundraising, and supporting the organization. Recruiting members with the right skills and commitment, and providing them with targeted training, will help the board become more effective in driving the organization's success.

Actions:

- Recruit New Board Members: Identify and recruit individuals who are committed to active engagement and have strong networks for fundraising and support by mid-2025.
- Provide Training: Develop and implement a training schedule, particularly in the area of nonprofit fundraising and donor engagement, for new board members to be completed by the end of 2025.
- Set Expectations: Establish clear expectations for board members, including time commitments and fundraising goals, by early 2026.
- Board Feedback: Gather input from board members on the clarity, relevance, and overall effectiveness of monthly reports to ensure they align with organizational needs and support informed decision-making.

Measures of Success:

- Board Composition: Ensure that 100% of board positions are filled by December 2026.
- Engagement Metrics: Achieve 100% of board members dedicating at least 25 hours annually to fundraising, outreach, and support activities, starting in 2025.
- Fulfillment of Commitments: Ensure that 100% of board members meet their give-or-get commitment by the end of 2026 and each year thereafter.

Strategy 3.3: Recruit and Retain Quality Volunteers

Effective volunteer recruitment and retention are vital for the organization's success. To achieve this, Rukundo International will explore new recruitment avenues, implement appreciation programs, and develop a structured volunteer management process.

Actions:

- **Enhance Recruitment Efforts:** Utilize various channels such as social media, community events, and partnerships with local organizations to attract new volunteers by mid-2025.
- **Develop Volunteer Processes:** Create a structured process for volunteer applications, interviews, and training by mid-2025.

- **Implement Engagement Programs:** Develop and launch programs for volunteer appreciation and recognition by late 2025.

Measures of Success:

- **Volunteer Retention Rate:** Achieve a 75% retention rate for key volunteer positions with at least one year of commitment by the end of 2026 and each year thereafter.
- **Formalized Processes:** Establish and formalize the volunteer recruitment, training, and supervision process by December 2025, with annual reviews thereafter.
- **Volunteer Satisfaction:** Develop a baseline satisfaction rate in 2025 through surveys and feedback. Maintain at least 70% satisfaction annually from 2026–2029, as measured through yearly reviews and engagement surveys.

Goal 4: Develop, Evaluate, and Streamline Fundraising Methods

Strategy 4.1: Expand and Strengthen Donor Base

To effectively grow our donor base, we will implement a donor segmentation strategy to categorize donors by history, preferences, and giving capacity. This enables personalized communications, enhancing donor satisfaction, loyalty, and retention. Expanding efforts will focus on creating donor personas and leveraging our existing donor and volunteer networks to identify and reach new audiences, such as bands, churches, and high-net-worth individuals, as part of a longer-term growth strategy.

In addition to segmentation, we will develop a comprehensive donor stewardship program that includes regular updates, personalized acknowledgments, and expressions of gratitude. A data-driven approach will inform targeted outreach and engagement strategies.

Actions:

- Develop donor personas to identify and tailor strategies for potential donor segments.
- Leverage existing loyal donors and volunteers to expand campaigns and identify new high-potential donors.
- Implement a personalized donor engagement plan, including quarterly updates and tailored communications.
- Use analytics to monitor trends and inform outreach.

Measures of Success:

- **Donor Retention Rate:** Maintain year-over-year donor retention.
- **Donor Acquisition:** Grow the donor base by 10% annually through new campaigns.
- **Recurring Donations:** Increase recurring donor contributions by 10% annually.

Strategy 4.2: Create New Fundraising Opportunities

To diversify revenue streams, we will develop new fundraising opportunities by focusing on grants, corporate partnerships, and innovative campaigns such as crowdfunding. Recruiting a dedicated development director and team will be integral to driving this initiative.

Actions:

- Recruit and onboard a development director to spearhead new initiatives.
- Establish a targeted grant-seeking strategy aligned with organizational priorities.
- Build relationships with corporate partners for sponsorship and matching gift opportunities.

Measures of Success:

- Revenue from New Initiatives: Raise $50,000 from new channels by Year 3 and $150,000 by Year 5.
- Grant Success Rate: Achieve a 10% success rate on submitted grant applications by Year 5.

Strategy 4.3: Streamline and Monitor Current Fundraising Events for Efficacy

To optimize the effectiveness of current fundraising events, we will implement a standardized evaluation framework focused on return on investment (ROI), participant feedback, and volunteer effort. This will help identify successful formats and areas for improvement.

Actions:

- Develop an evaluation framework for fundraising events, assessing ROI, engagement, and feedback.
- Conduct post-event debriefs to refine strategies and enhance future performance.
- Experiment with new event formats or themes to increase appeal and participation.

Measures of Success:

- Event ROI: Achieve a 10% annual increase in funds raised via quarterly fundraising events.
- Event Success Rate: Ensure 90% of events meet or exceed fundraising goals.
- Participant Feedback: Achieve 85% positive satisfaction scores from event attendees and volunteers.

Goal 5: Develop and Expand Effective Communications

Strategy 5.1: Increase Stakeholder Engagement

To inspire continued support and expand our reach, Rukundo International will refine its communication strategies to engage stakeholders—including donors, volunteers, and advocates—through compelling narratives and consistent updates. Our efforts will focus on fostering deeper connections with recurring and VIP donors while also re-engaging inactive supporters and volunteers. By strengthening these

relationships and expanding to new audiences through targeted outreach, we will move stakeholders from passive observers to active participants who donate, volunteer, and share our mission.

Actions:

- Implement a donor persona strategy to better understand and target new audience segments.
- Recruit a donor manager and launch a VIP supporter community (e.g., a named Facebook or WhatsApp group) to foster personal connections and build loyalty.
- Distribute key communications:
    - Quarterly: Newsletters, VIP donor updates
    - Termly (3x/year): Program updates for general and recurring donors and stakeholder reports
    - Annually: Reports summarizing accomplishments, distributed by the end of Q3.
- Analyze communication metrics (e.g., open and click-through rates) to inform ongoing strategy.
- Host annual live, virtual event(s) to engage donors directly and showcase program impact.

Measures of Success:

- Engagement: Increase stakeholder engagement activity (open and click-through rates) annually until reaching industry standards (47% open rate and 2.7% click-through rate), then maintain or exceed these benchmarks.
- Growth: 10% annual increase in newsletter and program update subscribers.
- Retention: Maintain a 90% retention rate for recurring donors.
- VIP Donor Engagement: Track personalized outreach efforts, with 95% satisfaction in annual feedback surveys.
- Virtual Event Participation: Establish a baseline (2025) and increase participation in annual live events by 10% each year, with 90% of attendees rating the events positively in post-event surveys.

Strategy 5.2: Improve Brand Recognition and Reputation

To increase Rukundo International's visibility and reputation, we will enhance our branding, leverage social media strategically, and explore creative ways to engage current and potential donors.

Actions:

- Develop a brand style guide to ensure consistent messaging and visuals across all platforms.
- Analyze current social media platforms and refine the strategy for key channels (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn) based on audience behavior.
- Expand content types by utilizing more video content, including live updates from Uganda and storytelling reels.
- Launch campaigns on emerging platforms, such as Threads and TikTok, with a strategy tailored to these audiences.
- Create a master communications calendar to align marketing efforts and ensure consistent messaging.

Measures of Success:

- Social Media Growth: 10% annual increase in followers across all platforms.
- Engagement: Achieve a 10% increase in average views, reach, and content interactions annually.
- New Engagements: 5% increase in engagement on new platforms per year.
- Website Traffic: Achieve a 10% annual increase in website visits driven by social media campaigns and email communications, from a baseline of 525 sessions in 2024.

Strategy 5.3: Create Influential Copy to Assist Fundraising Efforts (NEW)

Collaborating with the Development Team, the Communications Team will craft persuasive materials to support fundraising campaigns, grants, and donor engagement. This includes expanding beyond digital marketing to include high-quality printed materials.

Actions:

- Develop a fundraising packet with sleek, donor-centered materials (e.g., trifold brochures, program summaries, and annual accomplishment reports).
- Create an annual online fundraising toolkit with social media posts, email scripts, and campaign strategies.
- Update all printed and digital collateral annually to ensure accuracy and alignment with the organization's goals.
- Focus on storytelling-based content to connect donors emotionally with Rukundo's mission.

Measures of Success:

- Fundraising Packet Completion: Finalize the packet by Q2 each year.
- Toolkit Updates: Upload the updated crowdfunding toolkit 4 weeks before each event.
- Campaign Effectiveness: Complete three major fundraising campaigns annually, with each achieving 100% of set goals.

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