



IRISE INSTITUTE EAST AFRICA
2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Menstrual Justice in Action

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At a glance.

Irise Institute East Africa (IIEA) is a Ugandan-led NGO and a globally recognised leader in menstrual health (MH) and menstrual justice. IIEA is headquartered in Kampala, with programmes in Jinja, Iganga, Isingiro, and active through partner organizations across seven African countries.

In 2025, IIEA reached over 30,000 people directly across their comprehensive MH programmes. They grew their regional coalition, The Period Equality Network, from 160 to 270+ member organizations, trained 82 advocates through the Menstrual Justice Academy, and took the coordinator's seat at the Parliamentary Forum on Menstrual Justice in Uganda.

The organization operates at four levels of the menstrual health system simultaneously: direct service delivery, regional network leadership, advocate training, and policy advising.



Irise Institute East Africa team members (left to right): Georgina Asizu (Program Officer Communications, Partnerships & Advocacy), Sarah Namumbya (Program Officer Menstrual Health Education & Product Distribution), Lillian Bagala (Regional Director), Joyce Akello (Program Assistant Menstrual Health & Products)

"Since interacting with Irise Institute East Africa, I have become more confident during my periods. Previously, I used to miss my classes because I felt ashamed and I did not have access to pads. However, thanks to Irise, I am now able to attend my classes freely during periods."

Amina Nanfuna, 14 — Iwololo Primary School

FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

2025, a year of dignity, and of steady, measurable progress.

2025 has been a year of profound impact, growth, and learning for Irise Institute East Africa. Across all four programme areas, IIEA has demonstrated its commitment to creating period-friendly communities through a multi-layered approach that combines direct service delivery, advocacy, network coordination, policy influence, and community mobilization.

Our staff continued to run our life changing programmes. We grew The Period Equality Network past 270 member organizations this year. We strengthened the Menstrual Justice Academy, which has now trained 82 advocates across seven African countries. We distributed reusable products to 5,820 girls. We joined the Core Group of the Global Menstrual Health Collective and coordinated the Parliamentary Forum on Menstrual Justice.

In practice, this means a girl attending a period positive school in Jinja, a Tanzanian collective producing sign-language comics for deaf girls, Kenyan advocates lobbying their county's government, and the Ugandan Parliament discussing tax policy around period products are all directly impacted by our work. One institution, four levels of change.

This report sets out what we did at each of those levels in 2025.



Lillian Bagala
Regional Director, Irise Institute East Africa
Core Group, Global Menstrual Health Collective



HOW WE WORK

Periods should never be the reason a girl falls behind.

IIEA operates at four levels of the menstrual health system. The diagram below shows how the four levels relate, with a girl at the center.



1 Reaching girls directly.

Menstrual Cup Project and Period Positive Schools. Cups, products, and education delivered in 30+ schools in Jinja and Iganga.

2 Leading the regional network.

The Period Equality Network: 270+ organizations across the region. 13 small-grants partners funded this year.

3 Training the next generation of advocates.

The Menstrual Justice Academy: 82 advocates trained across 7 African countries. 32 alumni received micro-grants, reaching a further 7,832 people.

4 Shaping policy.

The Parliamentary Forum on Menstrual Justice (coordinated by IIEA's Sarah Ademun), Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education technical working groups, the Jinja District Budget Conference, and the live campaign to exempt menstrual products from VAT.

WHERE WE WORK

Building a world where dignity isn't an after-thought

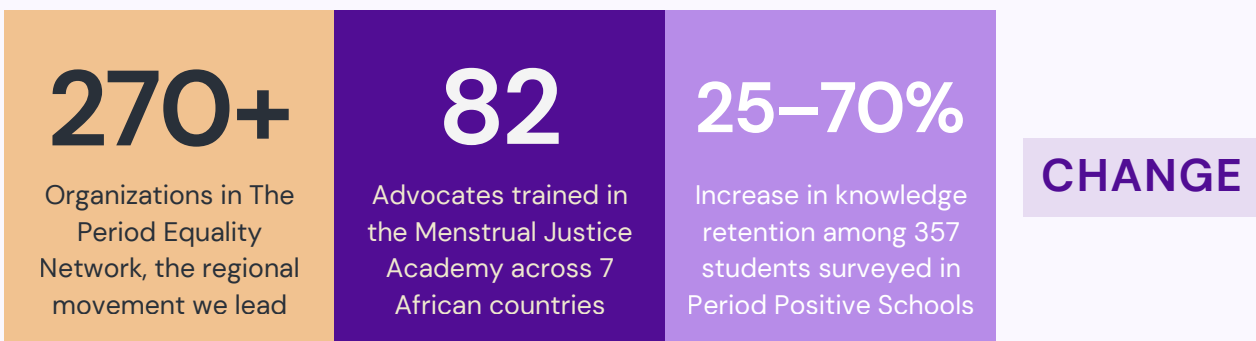
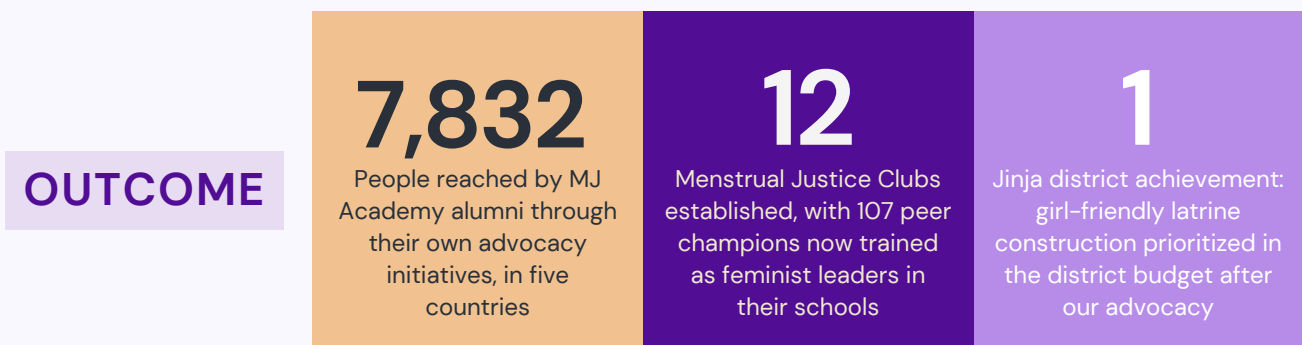
Irise Institute East Africa is headquartered in Kampala and delivers programmes directly in six districts of Uganda. Our reach extends across the continent through the Menstrual Justice Academy (alumni in seven African countries) and The Period Equality Network (270+ member organizations).



2025 IN NUMBERS

The year in figures.

Programme figures are grouped in three tiers: activity (what was done), outcomes (what was achieved), and change (movement in the systems that will influence the future).



HIGH LEVEL OVERVIEW

Our programmes

Educate

Stigma breaking and menstrual health education

Equip

Supply of products, WASH facilities & access

Advocate

Coalition building and policy change

PROGRAMME	PURPOSE	OUTCOME
Period Positive Schools	Foundational stigma breaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14,772 students empowered with MHM knowledge
Menstrual Justice Project (schools)	Menstrual health education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12,665 individuals educated on menstrual justice across schools and cultural institutions
Menstrual Cup Project	Product solutions and reproductive health education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5,230 women and girls provided sustainable period products
Menstrual Justice Academy	Stigma breaking and alliance building for advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 82 advocates upskilled in menstrual justice
The Period Equality Network (TPEN)	Coalition building & mentorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network grown to 270 organizations
TPEN Small Grants	Building sector capacity and partnership for the goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 regional project initiatives funded
Political advocacy and coalition building	Advocacy & systems change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IIEA represented at a global, national and local level

OUR PROGRAMMES



Period Positive Schools

Programme design

Period Positive Schools is a whole-school education and culture-change programme. Training is delivered to the whole school community (boys, girls, teachers, and girls pre-menarche). Products are distributed only to those who need them now. The training-to-product ratio reflects the programme design.

2025 activity

4,771 learners trained (4,014 girls, 757 boys), exceeding the annual target of 4,000. 1,820 received products (1,200 reusable pads, 620 period panties). 14,772 total reach including 9,230 community members reached through trained champions. 100 peer-to-peer learning participants (69 girls, 31 boys, including 31 with disabilities). Five menstruation clubs established.

Measured change

Pre and post-training knowledge surveys with 357 students showed a 25–70 percent increase in knowledge retention across domains. 200 baseline survey participants at Nakivale Refugee Settlement, where partner We Empower Her began Period Positive Schools work in 2025. Nine teachers completed Training of Trainers at Nakivale.

District outcome

IIEA's participation in the Jinja District Budget Conference contributed to the prioritization of girl-friendly latrine construction in the district budget.



“This activity opened our eyes as teachers. We realized how much our girls were silently suffering. Now, we are planning to create a safe room with extra pads and encourage open discussion in our health clubs.”

— A female teacher in a Period Positive School

OUR PROGRAMMES

Menstrual Cup Project



Programme design

The Flowcup Project equips schoolgirls and their mothers with a ten-year solution: IIEA x The Cova Project provide a menstrual cup paired with comprehensive reproductive health education. Girls leave understanding their bodies, equipped to make decisions rooted in fact, with the dignity and freedom to lead full lives.



2025 activity

3,622 people trained across 30 schools in Jinja (23) and Iganga (7): 3,222 students and 400 community mothers. 3,000 medical-grade Flowcups distributed (2,600 to schoolgirls, 400 to mothers). 620 period panties delivered to girls with special needs. 10 health workers trained as community-level first responders. 491 girls from the 2024 cohort followed up at twelve months.

Partner ecosystem reach

Five grassroots partners which we call the 'Flowcup network' (Girls Must, Awesome Mind Speaks, Period Equity Africa, ASK 8, Twezule Foundation) reached a further 1,608 girls and women. Total ecosystem reach: 5,230.

Programme history

2025 represented the fifth year of partnership between Australian non-profit The Cova Project and IIEA. The programme's focus remains on equipping girls and women with knowledge, skills, and access to sustainable menstrual health solutions. To date, the project has reached over 15,000 girls and women with flowcup menstrual cups, including secondary school girls, young women in universities and young mothers in communities.



"The Flow Cup changed everything. With the menstrual health education from the IIEA team, I gained confidence, comfort, and understanding of my body. I am now proud to use the cup and have become an advocate for it in my school and community."

–Ruth Namumbya, 18



OUR PROGRAMMES

The Period Equality Network (TPEN)



Programme design

The Period Equality Network (TPEN), hosted and led by IIEA, is a network, a regional convening and small-grants body for organizations working on menstrual health across East and West Africa.

2025 activity

Network grew from 160 to 270+ member organizations. 112 new membership applications received, including from Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan. 13 partner organizations directly funded through the TPEN Small Grants Programme across Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. Five-year TPEN Strategy launched at the August reflection and onboarding meeting (60+ attendees).

Convening

Co-hosted the Girls' Agenda Conference in Nairobi (28–30 October 2025) with 115 stakeholders. Pre-MHM Day webinar on 23 May reached 100+ participants from East and West Africa.



112

new membership applications received in 2025

13

partner organizations directly funded through the Small Grants Programme

115

stakeholders convened at the Girls' Agenda Conference, Nairobi, October 2025

OUR PROGRAMMES

Menstrual Justice Academy



Programme design

The Menstrual Justice Academy (MJA), an annual training and micro-grant programme for advocates working on menstrual health across Africa.

2025 activity

120 applications received, 100 places offered, 82 advocates completed the programme (58 women, 25 men) across four cohorts. Countries represented: Uganda (47), Kenya (15), Ghana (13), Tanzania (4), Rwanda (2), Liberia (1), Burundi (1). Attendance rate: 82 percent. 90 percent of participants showed measurably improved advocacy knowledge on post-training assessment.

Alumni outcomes

32 alumni received US\$100 micro-grants to launch their own advocacy initiatives. These initiatives reached 7,832 people across five countries. A 15-member alumni working group from Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, and Tanzania now meets quarterly to shape the curriculum and direct alumni-led campaigns.



"I used to think menstruation was only a girls' problem, but now as a trained Menstrual Justice champion, I know it's everyone's responsibility. I support my sisters and classmates with respect."

— Wambuzi, peer champion, Mukono Comprehensive

Menstrual Justice Project (FJS-funded)



4,458 students and teachers trained across 13 schools in four districts: 2,592 girls, 1,796 boys, 46 women, 24 men. Delivered with partners Awesome Mind Speaks (Jinja), Gufasha Foundation (Kayunga), Touch Ministries (Kumi), and Kaleke Kasome Foundation (Mpigi). 12 Menstrual Justice Clubs established with 107 peer champions trained, all of whom received Feminist Leadership Training. 40 cultural and religious leaders engaged in community dialogues.

10

years of providing
menstrual justice

Stories of change



IN HER WORDS

"When I received the menstrual cup and health and leadership training in 2023, those sessions built my confidence, helped me understand myself better, and encouraged me to speak up. In 2025, I was elected Head Prefect at Hornby High School."

- Kemigisha Ruth, Head Prefect (Hornby High School)



"I can concentrate better in class, and I even save the money my mother used to give me for pads to buy other necessities like underwear and scholastic materials."

- Kasiri Deborah, 17



"I used to use soil by skirt during my period. I stayed home and felt embarrassed. Now, I attend school every day with confidence and comfort."

- anonymous



"Since I started using the Flow Cup, I've felt more in control of my body. It's safe, reusable, and comfortable. I no longer have to choose between buying pads and other essential items like food or data bundles."

- Amina Nakitende, 22, Victoria University



EVIDENCE AND RIGOR

How we measure.

METHODS USED IN 2025

Pre and post training knowledge surveys. 357 students surveyed in Period Positive Schools. Knowledge retention rose between 25 and 70 percent across domains.

Twelve-month follow-up cohort. 491 girls from the 2024 Flow Cup cohort followed up in 2025 to verify continued use and benefit.

Independent partner evaluation. 550 evaluation survey participants across the Flowcup ecosystem with The Cova Project's surveys, including 50 Life Satisfaction Surveys measuring Hope in an independent survey conducted by The Phillips Foundation.

Baseline at Nakivale. 200 baseline survey participants at Nakivale Refugee Settlement, against which partner We Empower Her's Period Positive Schools work will be measured over the next three years.

Focus groups with girls living with disabilities. 61 FGDs conducted through Period Positive Schools to capture qualitative data on programme experience and outcome.



CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Threads through the work

Disability inclusion



780 girls living with disabilities received period products in 2025. 61 focus group discussions conducted with girls living with disabilities through Period Positive Schools. A further 122 reached through Academy alumni advocacy initiatives.

Male Engagement



2,553 boys and men trained across IIEA programmes in 2025: 1,796 boys in the Menstrual Justice Project, 757 boys in Period Positive Schools. Senior male teachers identified by partner schools as pivotal to sustaining interventions after initial training.

Mental health



Emerging programmatic link between menstrual health and mental wellbeing, raised by participants and partners across 2025. Kiiko Primary School formally requested mental health integration into the curriculum. IIEA is developing a replicable model with Wakiso partner Awesome Mind Speaks for rollout across the Flowcup network in 2026.

WASH infrastructure



90 percent of school latrines in IIEA project schools are dysfunctional. At Nanfugakyi Primary, 866 girls share five stalls. This is a recurring constraint on programme outcomes and the substantive reason behind IIEA's district-level budget advocacy.



“Before interacting with IIEA, I used to see menstruation as an extra burden on top of my disability. Now I have received period panties and I receive support from both boys and girls without disabilities, thanks to the peer-to-peer learning sessions.”

— Nakaibale Benita, 13, Nanfugakyi Primary School



NEW COLLABORATIONS

Better together

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



School For Life Training of Trainers

IIEA partnered with The Cova Project and School for Life to deliver a Training of Trainers at Mbazzi Riverside High School in Bujjuuko, Wakiso District. Eighteen educators were equipped with the curriculum, demonstration techniques, and follow-up methodology to lead Flow Cup and menstrual health education in their own schools, followed by three student training sessions to embed the practice.

International Reach and Collaboration

Irise Joint Global Strategy

IIEA hosted Bhuvana Balaji, an independent consultant from India, to support the development of the Irise Joint Global Strategy. 10 TPEN members were mobilized to participate 5 virtually and 7 physically at the IIEA Secretariat. Members shared insights on gaps, challenges, and emerging issues in MHH at grassroots level.



Girls' Agenda Conference – Nairobi

IIEA co-hosted the Girls' Agenda Conference partnership with The Kilgoris Project as lead convenors bringing together over 100 stakeholders in Kenya.



Partners For Equity/Australian International Development Network

IIEA facilitated a visit from Anubha Rawat, Projects Director at DAK International Network, Board Member at Partners for Equity and Advisory Council Member of the Australian International Development Network.



Better together

Capacity building for Trailblazers Mentoring Foundation

IIEA conducted a five-day training for Trailblazers Mentoring Foundation (@TMFUganda) to strengthen their reusable pads business model and improve product quality. The session equipped the team with skills in business development, product innovation, and quality assurance.



Cova Retreat Nakivale

IIEA took part in the 2025 Cova retreat hosted by partner We Empower Her in Isingiro, home to Nakivale Refugee Settlement. The gathering was a chance to share training innovations and review programme progress within refugee communities. It reflected a wider pattern across 2025 of learning travelling between partners, so that approaches proven in one setting can be adapted and carried into others.



Period Equity Africa's university work

Period Equity Africa, extended the Flow Cup programme into universities, a setting often overlooked in menstrual health work. PEA established three Period Hubs on campuses as safe spaces and support groups, and identified 15 student ambassadors to act as Flowcup and menstrual health focal points among their peers. Students reported better class attendance, less & menstruation-related absence. At Victoria University, the student union has brought menstrual health education into the orientation programme for first-year students.



COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

Reach and digital

In 2025 IIEA used digital platforms to convene advocates and supporters far beyond the districts where it works directly.

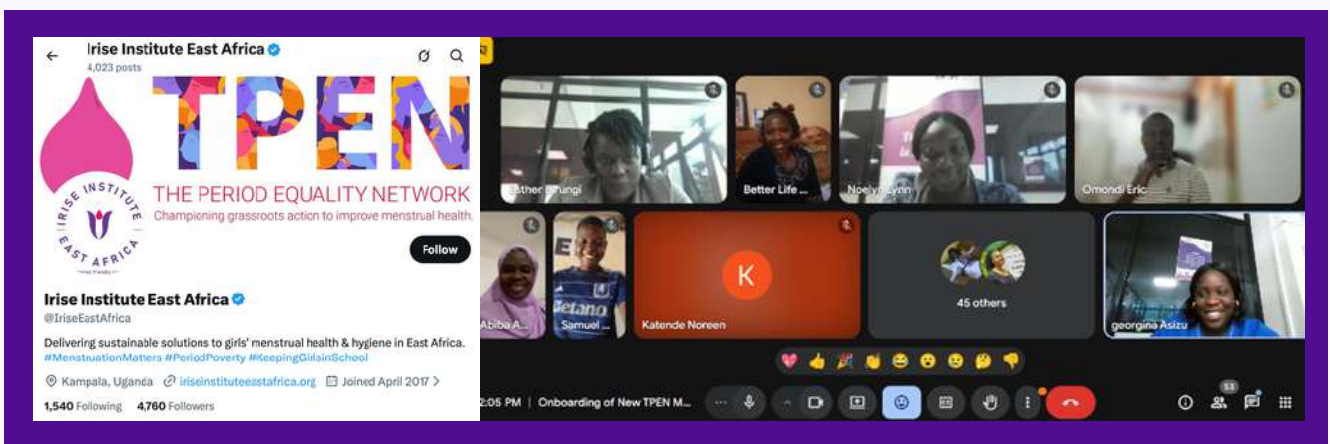
A Twitter Spaces session on the role of menstrual health data in gender statistics, hosted around the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, drew 220 participants.

The Pre-Menstrual Health Day webinar in May brought together more than 100 people from across East and West Africa, including 80 members of The Period Equality Network, and a webinar following the International Day of the Girl convened a further 38 advocates to reflect on the Menstrual Justice Project. These low-cost gatherings let girls, grassroots organisations, policymakers and partners share experience across borders in a way that in-person events alone could never reach.

Across its own channels, IIEA's following continued to grow steadily, with its main audience on X reaching close to 4,500 and consistent growth on LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook through the year.

Much of this content carried the voices of the movement itself, sharing impact stories from the Small Grants partners and the Menstrual Justice Academy alumni so that change happening at the grassroots reached a regional and global audience.

Underpinning this visible reach was a year of work on the systems behind it. IIEA reviewed its joint communications strategy with The Period Equality Network and developed communication guidelines for partners across the Menstrual Justice Project and the alumni network, covering messaging, branding, and clear standards on consent and data protection. This matters because the stories at the heart of this work belong to girls and women, and protecting how those stories are gathered and shared is as important as the reach they achieve.



DEEP DIVE

A deeper dive into the numbers

30,000+

people reached directly across our four core programmes, with thousands more reached through the network and alumni initiatives.

What we set out to do	Target	Achieved	Result
Learners trained, Period Positive Schools	4,000	4,771	Exceeded
Community members reached through champions	5,000	9,230	Exceeded
Flow Cup beneficiaries	4,230	5,230	Exceeded
Pre- and post-training knowledge surveys	300	357	Exceeded
Focus groups with girls living with disabilities	60	61	Exceeded
Baseline survey, Nakivale Refugee Settlement	200	200	Met
Teacher trainers equipped, Nakivale	10	9	90%
Academy advocates trained (100 places offered)	100	82	82% completed

DEEP DIVE

Who we reached.

Reach is recorded by age, sex and disability across every direct-delivery programme. The matrix below shows who took part in 2025, programme by programme.

Who took part	Menstrual Cup	Period Positive Schools	Menstrual Justice Project	All programmes
Girls (under 18)	3,635	5,999	6,350	15,984
Boys (under 18)	–	2,227	3,869	6,096
Adult women (19+)	798	3,752	1,341	5,891
Adult men (19+)	17	2,439	604	3,060
Girls living with disabilities	780	355	122	1,257
Cultural & religious leaders	–	–	40	40
Programme total	5,230	14,772	12,665	–



LOOKING AHEAD

2026 priorities...

1



Longitudinal evidence base

Expand the Flowcup follow-up cohort to 1,000 girls tracked at twelve months, with a published longitudinal study on retention, school attendance, and self-reported confidence.

2



VAT campaign

Advance the campaign to exempt menstrual products from VAT in Uganda toward a parliamentary outcome, coordinated through the Parliamentary Forum on Menstrual Justice.

3



Network capacity

Operationalise the five-year TPEN Strategy launched in August 2025: expanded small-grants disbursements, strengthened East African secretariat, dedicated alumni leadership track within the Menstrual Justice Academy.

4



Growth

2025 proved the model works. Direct delivery in Uganda, a 270-strong regional network, an academy producing advocates across seven countries, and a seat at the parliamentary table. Growth is the priority for 2026. If you want to be part of the locally led systems change we're leading in menstrual health, we'd like to hear from you.

THANK YOU

To our funders and partners....



None of this work is possible without those who share our dream of a dignified world for all... Will you join our next chapter?



Take action with us.

Invest in locally led change today with IIEA



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