



Followings Foundation

2025 Annual Review

Partnerships, Innovation, and Community Leadership

Leap now, your wings will follow.

Busubi Empowered Communities, Uganda · followingsfoundation.org



Welcome

Founder message

Lauren Exton

Director, Followings Foundation

Welcome to the 2025 edition of the Followings Foundation Annual Review.

2025 has been a year of extraordinary growth — not just in programs, but in the depth and diversity of the partnerships that make them possible. From Inner Wheel Clubs, to the newly established Kinoni Rotary Club, to the possibility of a Japanese volunteer embedded in Busubi for two full years — BEC's network continues to expand in ways we couldn't have dreamed of back when we began in 2017.

The convenience store is self-sustaining and the Cultural Troupe is preparing for their biggest ever stage. These are community-led initiatives, rooted in the knowledge and ambitions of the people of Busubi. We remain honoured to walk alongside them.

Key partner message

John Ssentamu

Director, Busubi Empowered Communities

2025 has been full of new beginnings. The book making workshop brought 64 trainees to our door — twice what we expected. The mudstove workshop has already changed how families cook. And 40 students have completed a film and television course funded by our local Rotary Club.

We are also so excited to be preparing to welcome a Japanese volunteer who will be living and working with us for two full years. This is a new chapter for BEC and the entire village.

We are growing stronger every day — because of you. Thank you.

"Without strategic partnerships and the support of our regular donors, these events just wouldn't be possible. THANK YOU."

— Rebecca Boon, Creative Director, Followings Foundation

Foundation Objectives

"We are so proud of our commitment to grassroots change. Both partners understand that the goal is neither to give nor receive endlessly, but to grow together. Side-by-side, BEC and Followings Foundation are committed to becoming beacons of change in both Australia and Uganda."

— Lauren Exton, Founder & Director

Objectives

To continue to support and fiscally sponsor the staffing, resourcing and maintenance of BEC Learning Centre as they move towards becoming financially independent.

To build a social licence and meaningful connection to communities in which Followings Foundation operates.

To increase the breadth of Followings Foundation's traditional corporate social responsibilities, ensuring the best possible social and developmental impact.

To create partnerships with non-government organisations and community groups addressing poverty, social disadvantage and environmental protection.

2025 at a Glance

A\$12k Raised (FY 2024–25) <i>reserves deployed to sustain BEC</i>	88% Spent on BEC programs <i>of all expenditure to the Centre</i>	64 Book making trainees <i>double the expected number</i>	40 Film & TV course graduates <i>Kinoni Rotary Club program</i>
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2025 Highlights

Q1

Store thriving

The Busubi Communities Convenience Store, opened December 2024, continued running smoothly under Aisha's management. All profits reinvested into restocking. The local primary school became a key wholesale customer.

Japanese volunteer confirmed

BEC confirmed the placement of a Japanese volunteer for two years. A fundraising campaign of AUD \$4,000 was launched to renovate suitable accommodation on the compound.

Q2

School borehole repaired

Followings Foundation funded emergency repair of the BEC Primary School's borehole — AUD \$168 — restoring clean water access to the school and reducing the time children spent fetching water.

Primary School Project planning

The BEC Primary School Project, funded by SMEC Foundation (\$2,450), entered the planning stage. A local partnership facilitator is to be appointed to guide implementation.

Accommodation renovation underway

Renovation of the volunteer accommodation building commenced — adding electricity, internet access, a kitchen, and dedicated workspace to an existing structure on the BEC compound.

Q3

Book making: 64 trainees

A pilot book making program delivered by the Inner Wheel Club of Kinoni attracted 64 trainees — double the expected number. The theme: 'Books Built by Hands, Dreams Built for Life.'

Mudstove workshops

The Inner Wheel Club of Lwengo partnered with BEC to deliver a community mudstove workshop, teaching participants to build efficient, lower-emission cooking stoves from local materials.

Film & TV course: 40 students

The Kinoni Rotary Club funded a structured film and television training course for 40 students — BEC's first foray into creative industry training.

Q4

Cultural Troupe preparing for more paid performances

The BEC Cultural Performance Troupe — equipped with instruments and costumes from the 2023 SMEC grant.

School Project to commence

The SMEC Foundation-funded BEC Primary School Project was set to commence in H2 2025, with a local facilitator appointed. Funds (\$2,450) held by Followings Foundation pending final implementation confirmation.

Tailoring continues to grow

12 full-time and 30 part-time tailoring trainees maintained throughout the year. Income-generation partnership with the Kinoni Rotary Club in development — uniform supply contract negotiations ongoing.

Programs in 2025

Convenience Store: Self-Sustaining from Day One

The Busubi Communities Convenience Store entered its first full year of operation in 2025 and has remained financially self-sustaining throughout. Under the management of BEC trainee Aisha, the store stocks everyday household essentials used by the Kyetume community, including bulk supplies purchased by the local primary school.

All profits are reinvested immediately into restocking. Looking ahead, surplus profits will be earmarked to support vocational training materials and BEC Learning Centre maintenance — creating a cycle of income that directly funds BEC's educational mission.

"The early challenge we had was finding someone to attend to the store full time. A trainee named Aisha has now been trained to operate it."

— John Ssentamu, Director, BEC

Book Making Workshop: Books Built by Hands, Dreams Built for Life

In September 2025, BEC hosted a landmark pilot initiative: a book making training program delivered by the Inner Wheel Club of Kinoni. The program attracted 64 trainees — double the expected number — another signal of the community's appetite for new, practical skills.

Participants used locally available materials throughout the production process, with a final cutting step completed in Kampala. Plans for a follow-up session include not only technical skills but business training — equipping participants, particularly girls, to turn book making into a sustainable income.

"The book making training program has been such a huge success. All trainees have expressed readiness to continue with the project."

— John Ssentamu, Director, BEC

"I am continually impressed with the curiosity and passion for learning shown by trainees and leaders at BEC."

— Rebecca Boon, Creative Director, Followings Foundation

Mudstove Workshops: Healthier Kitchens, Healthier Communities

In partnership with the Inner Wheel Club of Lwengo, BEC hosted a community mudstove construction workshop. Participants gathered at a local community kitchen to learn how to build efficient cooking stoves from locally sourced materials including tomato leaves, soil silt, sawdust, banana stem, and loam soil.

Mudstoves offer two critical benefits: reduced dangerous gases from fuel combustion, and the ability to cook multiple items simultaneously on one set of firewood. BEC students also constructed a mudstove in the Centre's own kitchen — a lasting, practical improvement to daily operations.

Film and Television Training

The Kinoni Rotary Club — established by John Ssentamu in 2024 — funded a structured film and television course for 40 students at BEC in 2025. This marked the first creative

industry training offered at the Centre, introducing students to production, storytelling, and the possibilities of careers in media.

Japanese Volunteer: Two Years in Busubi

BEC confirmed the placement of a skilled volunteer from Japan for two full years — an extraordinary commitment to the community. The volunteer will contribute across a wide range of activities including financial record keeping, English and Japanese language teaching, computer training, and youth program support.

To prepare, an existing building on the compound was renovated to provide comfortable, functional accommodation — fitted with electricity, internet, a kitchen, and a workspace. Followings Foundation ran a fundraising campaign to cover the AUD \$4,000 renovation cost.

"We believe this opportunity will be a huge step forward in serving more youths and creating great impact in the community we serve."

— John Ssentamu, Director, BEC

"This is such a great opportunity to have someone with a fresh perspective, new ideas and diverse experience contribute to BEC's goals and vision. We can't wait to collaborate with them!"

— Lauren Exton, Director, Followings Foundation

Primary School Project

The BEC Primary School Project, funded by a \$2,450 SMEC Foundation grant, moved into the planning stage in 2025. A preliminary act of support was the repair of the school's borehole (AUD \$168), restoring clean water access and reducing the burden on children and staff.

The project is scheduled to commence in the second half of 2025, with a local partnership facilitator appointed to guide implementation in collaboration with the school and community.

Tailoring and Cultural Programs

The tailoring program continued with 12 full-time and 30 part-time trainees throughout 2025. An income-generation partnership with the Kinoni Rotary Club was under development, targeting a school uniform supply contract. The Cultural Performance Troupe continued to perform and fundraise while preparing for their biggest ever stage: the Woodford Folk Festival in Brisbane, December 2026.

Our Partners

The breadth and depth of our partnerships is one of Followings Foundation's greatest strengths. In 2025, our partners and supporters include:

- SMEC Foundation — ongoing grant support (Primary School Project \$2,450)
- Sam Busbridge and Steph Xavier — SMEC Alumni
- Ross Hitt — advisor, supporter, and community connector

- Inner Wheel Club of Kinoni — book making program
- Inner Wheel Club of Lwengo — mudstove workshop
- Kinoni Rotary Club (est. John Ssentamu) — film & TV training and future Primary school project
- JICA - Japanese volunteer organisation — two-year embedded volunteer
- John Ssentamu — Director, BEC; community leader
- Shallon Nakimwero — Manager, Busubi Empowered Communities
- Aisha — store manager and BEC graduate
- All individual donors and community fundraisers across Australia, US, UK and beyond

Financial Transparency

The figures below are from our audited Profit & Loss for the financial year 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025. This year's expenditure exceeded donations received — reflecting the deliberate decision to deploy reserves built during the record 2023–24 year to maintain full program delivery for BEC.

Income · FY 2024–25	
Donations — Chuffed (via Stripe)	A\$4,520.00
Donations — Direct	A\$7,470.00
Total Income	A\$11,990.00
Expenditure	
BEC Learning Centre	A\$24,505.12
Contractor expenses (non salary)	A\$1,800.00
Accounting and bookkeeping	A\$1,308.00
Advertising and marketing (website)	A\$278.62
Bank charges and fees	A\$1.15
Total Expenditure	A\$27,892.89
Result	
Net position (drawn from reserves)	-A\$15,902.89

88% of all expenditure went directly to BEC Learning Centre programs and operations. This year's shortfall was funded from reserves accumulated in 2023–24 — a deliberate and planned use of those funds to sustain BEC's programs at full capacity.

Full financial records available for review at followingsfoundation.org/aboutus. We invite you to audit us and ask questions — transparency is at the heart of who we are.

Looking Ahead to 2026

As we look to 2026, Followings Foundation and BEC are filled with optimism. Key priorities include:

- Launching the BEC Primary School Project
- Supporting the Japanese volunteer's first full year in the community
- Growing the book making program into a sustainable enterprise for women and girls
- Establishing the tailoring uniform supply contract with the Rotary Club
- The Cultural Troupe performing at Woodford Folk Festival, Brisbane — December 2026
- Continuing to expand BEC's network of local and international partnerships

If you would like to support our work, please visit followingsfoundation.org or chuffed.org/project/followings. Every contribution — large or small — makes a lasting difference.

Webale. Webale Nnyo.

