

Ireme Invest Circular Economy Programme

Rwanda Green Fund & GIZ

Ireme Invest

In 2022, the Rwandan government launched Ireme Invest, a groundbreaking investment facility serving as the country's One-Stop Centre for Green Investments. Ireme Invest consists of a Credit Facility, managed by the Rwandan Development Bank (BRD), which provides soft loans as well as credit guarantees, and a Project Preparation Facility (PPF), managed by the Rwanda Green Fund (RGF), which offers (recoverable) grants, incubator and accelerator programmes, as well as equity investment for start-ups.

The Circular Economy Programme

Shortly after the establishment of Ireme Invest, the Waste & Circular Economy Project sought a cooperation with RGF to set up an accelerator programme with technical assistance (TA), as well as grants for the most successful ventures.

First phase – Coaching & Mentoring

Over 250 companies applied for the accelerator. After a thorough process, 30 businesses were selected to go through a six-month coaching and mentoring programme, during which the ventures were supported with technical expertise, including tailored administrative and business consulting services to improve production processes and sales.

Second phase – Grant funding & specialised technical assistance

After six months, all participating companies submitted a request for grant funding and additional TA. Seven companies were subsequently selected for further support. These companies received grants totalling 250.000 Euro and specialized TA for up to 12 months.

Highlights

1000 Hills Products produces and exports dried fruits into the EU. Through the grant it received, it was able to install a biodigester to process daily 2 tons of fruit waste into biofertilizer as well as biogas and electricity. While the fertilizer is used to enhance the pineapple growth, the energy too is used on-site to dry the pineapples it exports.

In addition, 1000 Hills received financial modelling support, resulting in a five-year projection with scenario analysis and sensitivity testing. The model was pivotal in enabling the company to secure 100.000 Euro in match funding through the develoPPP Ventures programme, as well as in closing negotiations for an additional 250,000 Euro investment from Polish investors. Through the support 1000 Hills received over an 18-month period, it now is on a clear growth trajectory.



Laminar Technologies specialises in fiber extraction from agricultural waste, which is used for packaging solutions. Through the grant, it was able to set up three new production units at banana-processing sites, enabling fiber extraction at source.

The company also faced challenges in structuring its sales approach and building a clear brand identity. Through tailored TA, the sales department was restructured, and the team introduced practical tools such as funnels and sales boards, which yielded immediate results. Laminar also received operational support with the installation of an in-house decorticating machine, eliminating the need to rent equipment and reducing production costs by 80 percent—from RWF 10 million to about RWF 2.5 million per unit. Support also extended to communication and branding, with the company clarifying its mission, vision, and storytelling framework, while expanding its team to include project managers.

Laminar is now fully operational, cost-efficient, and preparing to expand into regional markets, with concrete plans underway to establish operations in Goma, DRC.

SLS Energy, which reuses old battery cells from electric motorbikes to stationary battery packs, was supported in optimizing its value chain – from sourcing end-of-life batteries to delivering second-life products. The programme also enabled the company to design continuous production flows, strengthen quality control, and remove inefficiencies in its new production facility. On the commercial side, SLS improved its capacity

to generate, qualify, and convert leads, securing six potential clients, with two installations already completed.

The grant enabled SLS to invest in larger test machines, allowing a 500% increase in monthly output to 400 kWh. Looking ahead, the company aims to deploy 2.5 MWh of capacity in Rwanda, serving telecom towers, medical facilities, hotels and irrigation systems for smallholder farmers as well as refugee camps. Through its solutions energy costs can be cut by up to 40%, while also drastically reducing Co2 emission by replacing diesel generators with battery packs using recycled battery cells.

SLS' cofounder and CEO reflected that the Circular Economy Programme was *“transformative in rethinking the entire value chain, from sourcing and production to market engagement.”* Today, SLS is negotiating an international equity round and has been shortlisted for the develoPPP Ventures Programme, further strengthening its market position.

Kimonyi Women Development Group, a women-owned social enterprise that started out growing fruits and vegetables, was able to set up a system of source separation for households, businesses and institution in their home region of Musanze in northern Rwanda. The collected organic waste is used for compost production, which is sold back to local farmers and smallholders.

In addition, KWDG received structured financial tools and coaching to improve planning, budgeting, and cash flow management. In parallel, ten participants



underwent training on composting standards and practices, learning to use local organic materials, promote household waste separation, and adopt innovative techniques.

The cooperative is now producing more and higher-quality fertilizer, reducing costs, and improving collaboration among members, with tangible livelihood and environmental benefits.

Toddle Care, a woodworking company producing children's toys and furniture, was able to procure new machinery. To ensure full operability, dedicated technical assistance was provided for the installation of the machinery, which included upgrading to a three-phase electrical connection and adding a dust collector for workplace safety. Additionally, an intensive SketchUp training programme helped to improve the integration between design and production, streamlining the design-to-production workflow.

This all has significantly increased production capacity and precision, while enabling circular practices such as repurposing offcuts (over 10 tonnes in 2025) into educational toys and transitioning from raw wood to recycled inputs. Toddle Care is now scaling rapidly, with ambitions to expand regionally and to create employment for youth and women.

Aflimba focused on strategic growth and positioning as Rwanda's first social-luxury brand. Through the grant, Aflimba was able to procure better machinery, allowing to increase

its production. Additional dedicated business consulting delivered a business growth strategy framework, revenue diversification plans, sales dashboards, and an international PR roadmap.

Equipped with new branding tools and international visibility strategies, Aflimba is now well positioned to anchor Rwanda's reputation as a hub of craftsmanship while preparing for global expansion.

Legacy of the CE Programme

Waste Management & CE included as eligible Ireme Invest investment areas:

Waste and circularity are often overlooked as relevant fields of the green transition and were initially left out as investment areas for Ireme Invest. Seeing the positive impact of the CE Programme, they were included as investment areas for Ireme Invest. This means that companies working with and in these fields can now apply to support, including for the Ireme Credit Facility, which is managed by the BRD.

Blueprint for future incubation programmes:

Ireme Invest being a new facility, there was little hands-on experience incubating businesses. The CE Programme proved to be a successful two-phase approach, including supporting companies with tailored technical assistance before, during and after receiving financial support. Hitherto, Ireme Invest has implemented two other incubation programmes using the approach and lessons learned during the Circular Economy Programme.

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