



## NEWSLETTER 2/2025

### From Kigali to Zurich:

What a Swiss business trip taught  
Ihuriro Drink about growth



Some businesses are born out of purpose. Others, out of necessity. For Marie-Aimée Umuhire, the story of Ihuriro Drink is deeply rooted in legacy, a daughter's decision to continue what her mother began, and to carry it forward with purpose and pride.

Marie-Aimée is the Managing Director of Ihuriro Drink, though the company's real beginnings trace back to 1985, when her mother, Julienne, began crafting traditional Rwandan drinks made out of bananas and a sorghum concentrate.

"For us, it was more than a business. It was a way of life for my family," she shares. In 2018, Marie-Aimée took a decisive step: she filed for official registration at the Rwanda Development Board, determined to professionalize her family's operation, scale production, and reimagine the brand for a wider audience.

"I had questions," she recalls. "Big ones. What should the name of our flagship product be? What kind of packaging should we use? I wanted to honor where we came from, but also give the business space to evolve."

The answers began to come when she joined BPN Rwanda. Introduced by one of her mother's longtime clients, Marie-Aimée was drawn to the opportunity for reflection and clarity. That's how Yuliyana was born, a name inspired by her mother's name Julienne, a tribute to her mother's work and the values she built the business on. "It's not just a drink," she explains. "Yuliyana is about joy, warmth, and connection."

Through BPN's coaching, Marie-Aimée found more than solutions to her branding dilemmas. She found a new lens for leadership and growth.

**"BPN helped me think not just as a business owner, but as a steward of something bigger. Every decision now feels more grounded, more intentional."**

That same mindset led her to join the Business Owners Association (BOA) in 2023, after completing the core BPN program.

### An unexpected spark at Peppe GmbH

Joining BOA wasn't just about networking.

"I admired their values, especially their focus on social responsibility and support for future entrepreneurs. That humility, forward thinking and culture of mutual respect resonated deeply with me."

In April 2025, she embarked on her first BOA study trip to Switzerland, an experience that would shift her perspective entirely

"I expected to learn," she says, "but I didn't expect to be so inspired." One company, in particular, left a lasting impression: Peppe GmbH, the producers of Ingwerer. "Philip Jenzer, the original developer of the recipe, and I connected instantly," she recalls.

"He understood what it meant to create a product that tells a story. Their company's philosophy aligned with mine: that quality and emotion must go hand-in-hand." Switzerland also introduced her to new ideas about partnerships, legacy-building, and vocational development. She was struck by how seriously the Swiss take business succession, and how they embed professionalism from a young age. "At Kaisin restaurant, I saw a food spot and an Adidas shoe stand sharing space. It reminded me that collaboration has the potential to be powerful where possible. It sparked new thoughts about how Ihuriro Drink Ltd. might grow through strategic partnerships."

That vision, however, isn't just outward-looking. At the heart of it all is an unshakable commitment to quality. "I left Switzerland with one conviction: quality drives growth, trust, and reputation. It's non-negotiable."

The trip wasn't without hurdles. Visa issues nearly derailed her plans, but the BPN team found workarounds. "They didn't give up on us," she says. "That kind of support is rare. It reminded me why I believe in this community."

For BPN core program graduates who haven't yet joined BOA, Marie-Aimée's message is simple: "You're missing out. The exposure, mentorship and the opportunities we get are not things you can buy or get access to haphazardly. They come from being in the right environment, surrounded by people who genuinely want to see you succeed."

Looking ahead, she envisions Ihuriro Drink as more than a successful company. She sees it as a symbol of generational resilience, quality rooted in culture, and of the possibilities that emerge when tradition meets innovation.

"I'm still learning every day," she says. "But now, I know I'm not walking this path alone. I want to see this company grow beyond borders, surpassing local and regional markets to global recognition."







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## Upcoming Seminars 2025

### Kigali - Business Academy

- ☑ Dynamic Communication for Leaders  
7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> July
- ☑ Legal Clinic  
30<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> July
- ☑ Personal Branding  
6<sup>th</sup> August
- ☑ Customer Care  
28<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> August



**BOOK YOUR SPOT: →**

### Musanze - Business Academy

- ☑ Taxation  
24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> July
- ☑ Social Media Marketing  
21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> August
- ☑ HR & Rwandan Labour Law  
8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> September



**BOOK YOUR SPOT: →**

## Your partner for the further development and expansion of your business.

Are you ready to take your business to the next level? Join the BPN community today and gain access to resources, support, and growth opportunities that will help you thrive.

At BPN Rwanda, we believe that entrepreneurship is a powerful catalyst for economic development. Our mission extends beyond business growth; we are committed to developing ethical, visionary leaders who build sustainable companies that stand the test of time. We partner with entrepreneurs to help them refine their business models, grow their teams, and navigate the complexities of the market.



We are committed to being your partner at every stage of your business journey. BPN's ongoing support is designed to help you reflect, adjust, and scale your business. Together, we can overcome challenges and seize opportunities for growth.

**Stay tuned for our next edition.**

