2025 Progress Report

1. Note any significant changes within the organization since the grant was approved.
Since becoming a Together Women Rise grantee, we elevated Kate Kiama, previously Director of Programs, to the co-CEO role alongside co-founder Tammy Tibbetts, effective January 2025. Here is an announcement of this new chapter. The biggest news, which we shared last month, is that our Board has approved a merger with Girl Rising, a 2023-2024 Together Women Rise grantee. We are thrilled about this future expansion of our mission across East Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and the U.S. Regarding other personnel changes, we no longer have a Development Manager (please remove Kayla Pate from your system). Tammy is your contact.

2. Explain material changes, if any, in the financial situation of the organization.
She's the First reduced our budget in 2025, from a desired $1.76M budget to $1.4M, in response to the funding strain in the sector, which we've increasingly felt over the past 2 years — and even more sharply since recent political changes. While we thankfully did not have government funding, there has been a cascading effect from those political decisions (such as corporate philanthropy stepping back from gender issues). We wanted to ensure we could maintain a three-month cash runway with solid revenue projections. To help balance our budget, we decided not to fill vacant development and communications positions.

3. Describe what progress you have made with the problems, needs, or opportunities.
Since March 2024, She's the First has been in a critical period of momentum-building through the **Girls First Institute (GFI)**—our global learning and training hub that equips grassroots leaders with tools and knowledge to drive transformational change for girls.

With the generous support of Together Women Rise, we have continued to **scale access to our signature girl-centered toolkits and mentorship training**, while also refining how these offerings support deeper program outcomes across diverse contexts.

We've deployed over **3,000 physical toolkits** to frontline practitioners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America this year, spanning topics like feminist mentorship, sexual and reproductive health, life skills, and agency-building. While these resources are central to our model, their true value lies in **how they are used**: embedded in safe, structured mentorship environments that local leaders facilitate. For instance, the *What Would You Do?* card deck is now being used to spark conversations on consent and decision-making in Kenya and Uganda—with **72% of mentors** reporting increased confidence navigating sensitive topics.

Since March, we've provided tailored training to **90+ grassroots organizations**—through our **flagship Partner Coalition** (15 multi-year partners) and our broader Girls First Network. These sessions, delivered in virtual cohorts and on-site intensives, strengthen local organizations' capacities to design, evaluate, and sustain girl-centered interventions in their communities.

We've found that pairing tools with training is catalytic. Early evaluations from our current cohort show a **near 30-point increase in comfort and capability among mentors** on topics like agency and SRHR. We are actively tracking these figures and expect them to grow as mentors integrate their training into regular programming.

While the Partner Coalition serves as a learning lab, the Girls First Institute ensures that **lessons are shared across the entire ecosystem**—so organizations not directly in the Coalition still benefit from open-source tools, community learning events, and self-paced digital resources. Our training model is designed to be self-replicating: practitioners who receive GFI training report feeling confident to **train their peers** or younger staff, reinforcing sustainability beyond the original grant touchpoint.

The Together Women Rise investment has helped us build not just programs, but a platform and process for sustainable change. As we continue on, your support will enable us to reach more organizations in under-resourced areas, deepen multilingual access, and expand our evaluation frameworks to track long-term shifts in girls' rights, confidence, and leadership.

4. Identify changes, if any, to the scope of your project and explain these changes.
While we've remained committed to our core mission and the original scope of work, one key adjustment was necessary due to a reduction in organizational budget. We scaled back the size of seven 2025 grant commitments within our **Partner Coalition**. This change was communicated transparently and early, and none of the eight newest organizations—those most recently onboarded into the Coalition—were affected.

Our long-standing partners, many of whom have benefited from multiple years of STF support and capacity-building, were well-positioned to manage this transition. We have continued to provide them with fundraising training and technical assistance, and some have already secured new funding from other sources, further mitigating any setbacks.

At the same time, we are thrilled to report a positive expansion of our programming in East Africa, particularly in Uganda, thanks to renewed support from the Dioraphte Foundation. This new funding has enabled us to broaden the reach of the Girls First Institute beyond the Partner Coalition, particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

As of Q2 2025:

- **127 CBOs in Kenya and Uganda** are actively enrolled in the Girls First Institute
- **66 are on track to receive certification by Q3**, with 40 more expected by Q4
- **70%** of enrolled CBOs attended our in-person training Summits in Nairobi and Kampala
- These organizations are collectively projected to reach **over 54,000 girls** with improved SRHR programming and mentorship

- Through participatory design sessions, SRHR emerged as a top priority; our July 2025 summit deepened learning through peer exchange, particularly on safeguarding and menstrual hygiene management

This East Africa expansion demonstrates how flexible, catalytic support like that of Together Women Rise helps us remain agile and responsive. Even in this chaotic climate, we've been able to **sustain our momentum and deepen impact**—especially where the needs are most urgent and the growth opportunities most promising.

We remain on track to meet our 2025 revenue targets and continue offering high-quality, girl-centered tools and training at scale through the Girls First Institute.

5. Share challenges you have experienced and lessons learned:
While She's the First has made significant progress in delivering tools and training through the Girls First Institute, we've faced several operational and geopolitical challenges that have required thoughtful adaptation. These experiences have sharpened our crisis planning and underscored the importance of local solutions and flexible program design.

1. Political Unrest and Planning Uncertainty in Kenya
In both 2024 and 2025, Kenya experienced heightened political protests in July, coinciding with national budget announcements and the start of the new financial year. These protests disrupted transport, created safety risks, and made it increasingly difficult to plan in-person events like the Girls First Summit. In 2024, we had to work closely with the hotels and venues to accommodate guests earlier than the start of the program to guarantee their safety. In 2025, we proceeded cautiously amid unpredictable conditions. In response, our team is proactively exploring a permanent shift of major in-person convenings—including the Girls First Summit—to early June, to avoid recurring disruptions tied to the July political calendar. This forward-looking change reflects lessons learned the hard way and our commitment to centering safety, continuity, and access in program delivery.

2. Cross-Border Toolkit Logistics in Uganda
In 2024, we encountered unexpectedly high customs fees when shipping printed toolkits from Kenya into Uganda, significantly straining our operational budget. As a solution, we shifted to local production in Uganda in 2025, partnering with a local vendor to produce toolkits directly within the country. This not only resolved the customs issue but also strengthened our commitment to local sourcing and increased efficiency for future scaling.

3. Navigating Broader Regional Instability

Across our East African footprint, we are continuously navigating the ripple effects of inflation, economic volatility, and tightening regulations affecting NGOs. These contextual realities have reinforced the value of investing in in-country staff, maintaining open communication with our partners, and retaining budgetary flexibility for emergency pivots.

6. Do you anticipate future challenges to complete your project?
She's the First is steady. We do not anticipate any challenges to completing this project.

7. Provide a detailed list of all expenses incurred during the reporting period, which have been paid for with the Together Women Rise grant.

Category	Amount (USD)	Description
Training Manager Salary	$10,000	Supported staffing costs for our Kenya-based Training Manager, who led in-person and virtual training sessions, and one-on-one mentorship support for over 40 CBOs. Activities included curriculum design, facilitation of 2 virtual cohort workshops, and follow-up advising with Partner Coalition members.
Partner Coalition Grants	$15,000	Direct support to Partner Coalition organizations. Funds enabled local implementation of girl-centered programming, including mentorship groups, SRHR sessions, and monitoring & evaluation activities aligned with the Girls First Institute.
In-Person Training (Nairobi)	$5,000	Contributed to the planning and partial prepayment of logistics for 2025 in-person training, including venue reservation, workshop materials, and travel stipends for girls. These convenings in Kampala and Nairobi brought together East African CBOs to exchange learning and receive training to accelerate them to the advanced certification pathway of the Girls First Institute.
Total	**$30,000**	

8. Include any other relevant information in the comments box.
We are proud to share our 2024 Annual Report and 15th Anniversary story booklet with you.