



LGBTQIA+ Travel Innovators Program

Impact report | Cohort 1 | June – November 2025

A joint initiative of IGLTA Foundation & TUI Care Foundation

TUI Futureshapers Global

The TUI Futureshapers Global: LGBTQIA+ Travel Innovators Program is a first-of-its-kind, six-month mentorship and capacity-building initiative co-designed by the IGLTA Foundation and TUI Care Foundation. The program brings together **52 participants from 36 destinations** across two cohorts, spanning five continents and reflecting the diversity of LGBTQIA+ led tourism businesses worldwide. Beyond the numbers, each participant represents a story of resilience, innovation, and meaningful impact within their communities and the travel industry.

The program is grounded in a clear strategic choice: to invest where impact potential is highest but support is lowest — connecting local LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs with global tourism infrastructure, funding pathways, and industry networks they would not otherwise access.

Cohort 1 at a Glance

26
entrepreneurs

from **20+ countries** completed the full 6-month program

100%
of participants

activated IGLTA membership, joining a global network of 14,000+ LGBTQ+ welcoming businesses

7 tourism
segments

representing businesses across the tourism value chain

6 structured
training modules

delivered, covering business fundamentals

Every
participant

matched with an expert industry mentor

First TUI Care
Foundation
program

specifically focused on LGBTQIA+ inclusion in tourism

10+ virtual
networking

and workshop sessions

The Case for Change

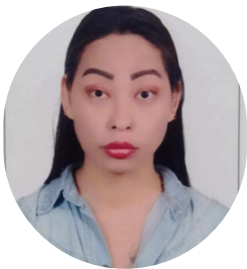
- LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs in emerging destinations face a mix of social, legal, and economic challenges that make running a business particularly complex. Social stigma and cultural misunderstandings often force them to balance visibility with personal safety, while digital platforms can limit their ability to reach the right audience.
- On a systemic level, outdated laws, lack of representation, and hostility from landlords or partners can directly threaten their operations. Financially, they struggle with limited investment, lack of specialized training, and gaps in the workforce, especially for services that require lived LGBTQ+ experience.

Meet the Cohort

Cohort 1 ran from June to November 2025, delivering structured business training, one-on-one mentorship, and access to global LGBTQIA+ tourism networks — empowering entrepreneurs in emerging and underserved destinations worldwide.

Stories featured in this report





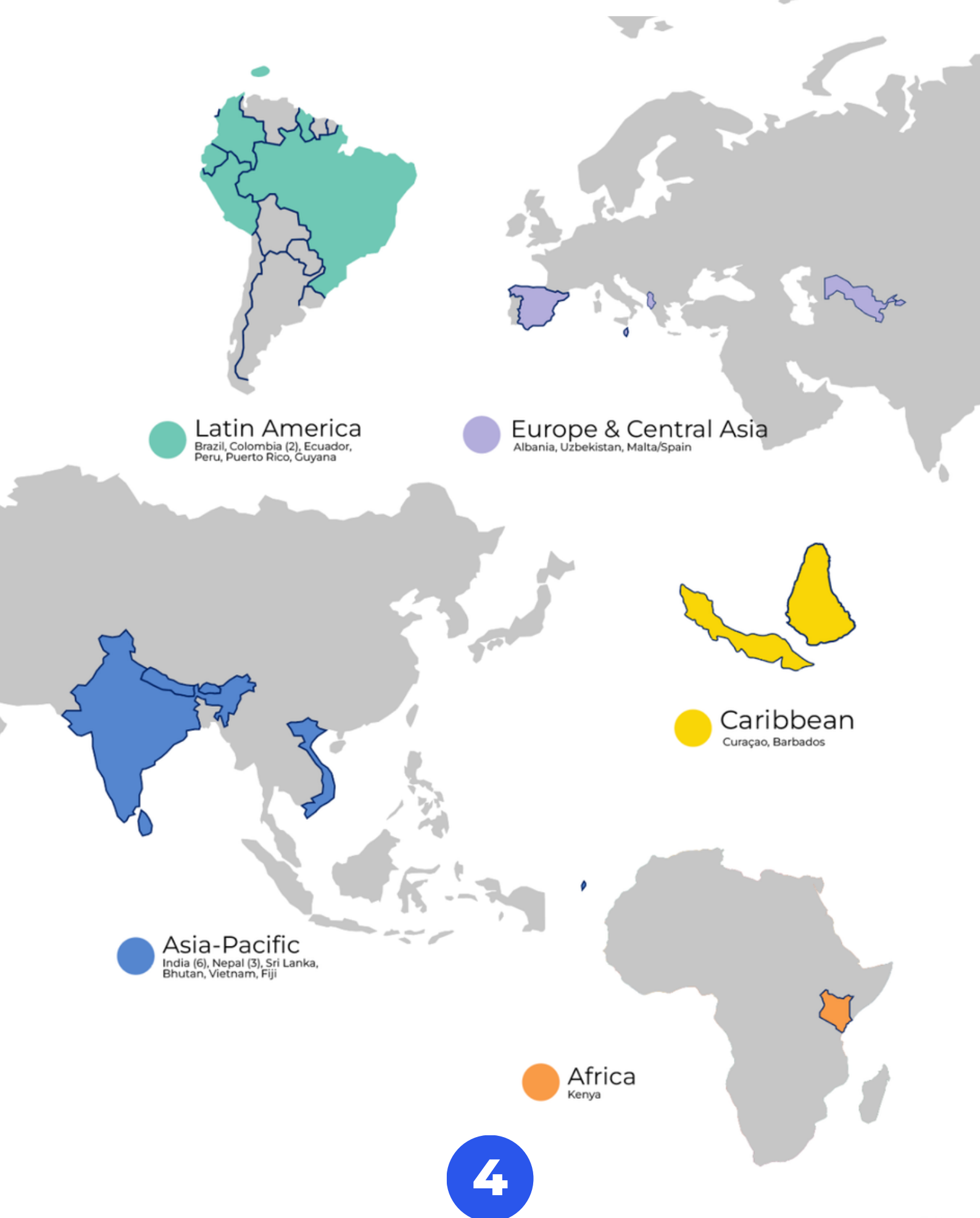
Meet the Cohort

[Learn more about the cohort](#)



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Cohort 1 - Around the world



TUI Futuroshapers

Global | *case studies*

Case Studies: LGBTQIA+Travel Innovators and Program Impact

The following profiles highlight the diversity of impact created by Cohort 1 participants — each building a more inclusive, equitable tourism industry from their corner of the world.



Baltazar de Almeida (he/him) | TTour — Brazil

TTour is a pioneering Afro-queer tourism initiative founded by Baltazar, emerging from his lived experience in a favela in Angra dos Reis, where access to leisure and mobility was often limited by violence and exclusion. The project is built on three pillars: representation through information, intersectionality in practice, and cultural preservation, including landmark work in restoring LGBTQ+ cultural memory such as the recognition of Madame Satã's tomb as a protected heritage site.

“This program strengthened our strategic vision and helped us better structure our Afro-queer itinerary with clearer positioning and global expansion goals,” Baltazar said.

A key outcome was increased institutional recognition, including membership in IGLTA, which opened doors to partnerships with organizations such as the LGBT Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, as well as greater engagement with public tourism institutions in Brazil.

The program contributed to stronger media exposure and improved credibility with tourism authorities, reinforcing TTour’s role in inclusive cultural development. Recognition at the Black Travel Summit for the “Madame Satã Forever” itinerary further validated both its cultural and commercial impact.



Nandita Gupta (she/her) | Mango Soufflé Productions — India

Nandita is the founder of Rajasthan's first Queer Women's Collective, created to build affirming spaces for AFAB individuals and expand queer visibility within Jaipur's festival culture. Her work includes co-organizing the Jaipur Queer Gulabi Pride Parade and developing community-led experiences such as Queer Food Walks and "Gulabi Dandiya," alongside initiatives reconnecting queer identity with Jaipur's historical narratives.

Participation in the TUI Futureshapers program has been deeply transformative in strengthening both her confidence and her business direction. Coming from an events background, the program supported her transition into queer tourism by providing structured learning, sector understanding, and clearer strategic direction.

“This program helped me reduce uncertainty and gave me the confidence to move from events into queer tourism with much more clarity,” Nandita said.

“The sessions and mentorship helped me believe more strongly in the long-term potential of my venture.”

The program also strengthened her ability to position her venture within the global LGBTQIA+ tourism ecosystem, refine her business approach, and identify future collaboration opportunities, while reinforcing the importance of visibility for queer entrepreneurs in emerging markets.

“I now feel more grounded in my vision and more equipped to build inclusive cultural spaces in Jaipur.”



Njeri Gachuhi (she/her) | The Travelling Wakili — Kenya

Founded to address the lack of safety and representation for queer women in African travel, The Travelling Wakili builds structured partnerships with local suppliers across Kenya — from boat handlers in Lamu to safari lodges in the Maasai Mara — to actively advance inclusive tourism practices. Through curated group travel and community initiatives, the business creates safer, identity-affirming spaces while supporting local economic inclusion.

The TUI Futureshapers program significantly strengthened the company's strategic clarity and operational structure. It helped refine market positioning within purpose-driven travel, improve storytelling and digital strategy, and adopt more sustainable and collaborative operating models.

"This program has been both affirming and transformative for how I build and scale my business," Njeri said. "I now have a clearer framework for decision-making and a stronger understanding of my competitive advantage in niche and underserved markets."

A key outcome has been the shift toward more intentional growth strategies, including stronger alignment with global market opportunities and more structured partnerships that support expansion while reinforcing inclusive tourism in Kenya and East Africa.



Janice Tjon Sien Kie (she/her) |Outcaribbean — Curaçao

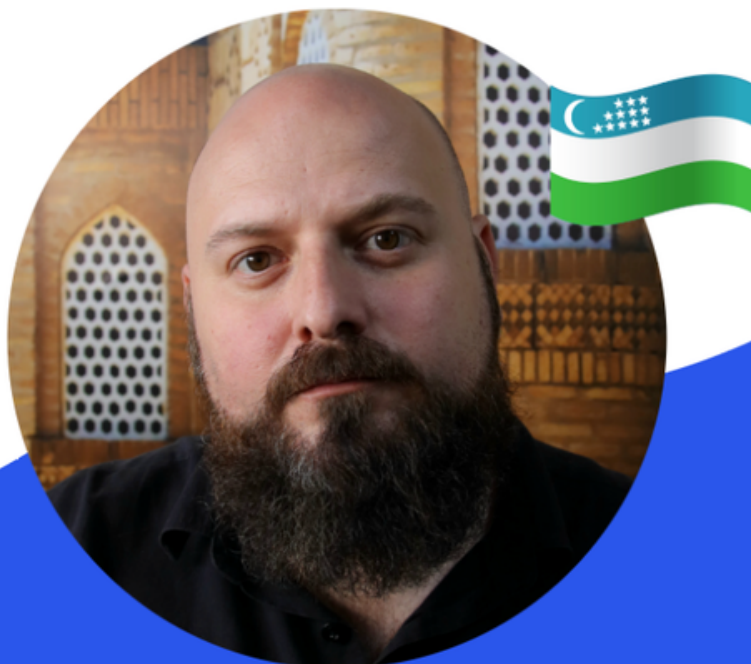
Outcaribbean is a travel media platform created by Janice Tjon Sien Kie to connect LGBTQ+ travelers with authentic, safe, and culturally rich experiences across the Caribbean. The platform highlights LGBTQ+ welcoming businesses, amplifies queer Caribbean stories, and is currently developing new tools to connect travelers directly with trusted local entrepreneurs and artists.

Through the TUI Futureshapers program, Janice strengthened the foundation and strategic direction of the business, particularly in marketing, branding, PR, and partnership development. The program also helped her refine how Outcaribbean is positioned and communicated to global audiences, while providing a clearer structure for the development of the platform's website and upcoming app.

"This program gave me the tools to make business decisions with much greater confidence and clarity," Janice said. "It helped me think more strategically about visibility, partnerships, and how to present Outcaribbean and its mission to the world."

The mentorship and international perspectives gained through the program also encouraged Janice to approach growth more intentionally and to see identity and representation as strengths within the business model.

"I now have a much stronger foundation to build from and feel genuinely prepared to take the next steps with clarity and purpose," she added.



Mikhail Sterlikov (he/him) | Irene Plus Travel LLC — Uzbekistan

Irene Plus Travel is a boutique destination management company focused on delivering thoughtful, culturally sensitive travel experiences across Central Asia. Operating in a region with a complex social and legal environment, the company takes a responsible and measured approach to inclusion, placing strong emphasis on respect, awareness, and personalized service for all travelers, including LGBTQ+ guests.

“At the core of our philosophy is understanding each guest individually and creating a comfortable and respectful environment throughout the journey,” said Mikhail Sterlikov, Founder of Irene Plus Travel.

The company works closely with local partners such as guides, drivers, hotels, and restaurants to ensure a welcoming and flexible approach to different traveler needs, while also providing honest guidance on local cultural sensitivities and behavioral norms.

Participation in the TUI Futureshapers Program has supported the team in strengthening its business approach, particularly in sales and marketing tools, while also providing a clearer understanding of niche market positioning and future growth opportunities.

The program offered valuable exposure to international perspectives and best practices, encouraging a balanced and practical approach to inclusion within the regional context.

“The program helped us better understand how to position ourselves internationally while staying true to the realities of our region,” Mikhail added. “It gave us practical tools, new perspectives, and confidence for the future growth of our company.”

As part of its ongoing development, the company has started to reflect its values of responsibility and inclusion within its catalogue, website, and promotional materials, including its presence at ITB Berlin 2026. These efforts are integrated into a broader sustainability framework, focusing on respectful engagement, local collaboration, and meaningful travel experiences.



About the TUI Care Foundation's global TUI Futureshapers programme

The TUI Care Foundation's global TUI Futureshapers programme offers the tools, resources, expertise and workspace for Futureshapers to co-work and build the solutions that destination communities need. It's all about empowering passionate people in tourism destinations who are committed to turning social and environmental challenges into entrepreneurial opportunities.

