



Annual Report 2023



To the Board of Directors

It has been an eventful year for the Tujenge Scholars. Long-time Program Director Benjamin Dickensheets returned to the U.S. in the Fall of 2022 to begin a PhD in Physics at Cornell University, and Carol Jean Gallo took on the role after five years as a teacher in the Scholars Program. Both Cohorts 6 and 7 benefitted from having special guests for class discussions, and all have shown tremendous growth in terms of academic aptitude and English proficiency. Most students, in both cohorts, were active in volunteering, community service, entrepreneurship, and/or Tujenge-based projects. Highlights of special guests and student projects are provided in this report, in addition to a mini-conference held in June featuring several Tujenge alumni who presented their research and shared their advice about university to Cohorts 6 and 7. Finally, Tujenge's stellar interns and alumni staff have been instrumental in ensuring the smooth functioning of day-to-day operations. None of this would be possible without the generous support of our donors.

Visit from the Ambassador of the United States

In January 2023, a delegation from the Embassy of the United States of America visited Tujenge on the International Day of Education. Representatives from the U.S. Embassy discussed the many resources available for Tujenge students, including access to American Spaces and American Corner, where students can check out books from the library and make use of high-speed internet. They also discussed internship and job opportunities for students at the Embassy, and Ambassador Higgins gave an inspiring speech about the value and importance of education.



U.S. Ambassador Higgins with Tujenge students
on the International Day of Education, January 24, 2023

Orientation Week

At the beginning of January, Cohort 6 and interns from Cohort 5 helped Tujenge staff welcome the new Cohort 7 students. Activities included games to challenge students' engineering logic, such as spaghetti towers and an egg drop, as well as a variety of ice-breakers and an afternoon of sports. There were also collaborative performances of music, theater, poetry and art addressing the prompt: "What does Burundi look like 15 years from now?"



Spaghetti towers



A creative egg drop design

Cohort 7

Curriculum

Spring Term 2023:

- Math Fundamentals
- English Communication Arts
- Digital Literacy
- Science and Humanity

Summer Term 2023:

- SAT Math
- English Communication Arts
- Liberal Arts Seminar
- Peace Studies
- Essay Writing Workshop
- Science and Humanity
- College Applications Preparation

Fall Term 2023:

- English Communication Arts
- Liberal Arts Seminar
- Peace Studies
- Climate, Environment, and Human Societies
- Standardized Test Preparation
- College Applications

Tujenge Term 2024 (subject to change):

- Calculus
- Computer Programming
- Philosophy and Technology
- English Writing Workshop
- African Literature
- International Relations
- Africana Studies
- University Preparation

Academic Profile

Median class rank:

1.5

Median final year grade

80.94

Median score on Exam d'Etat:

79.6%

Average score on the Exam
d'Etat(Percentile):

99.7th

Percentile nationally

Cohort 7 Fun Facts



Yalled Irakoze is from Ruyigi Province. He sings in his church and plays the keyboards, guitar, and bass. He sees Tujenge as a free space where anyone can express their perspective without judgment. One of his favorite subjects is Peace Studies, where he has learned to look at different sides of a conflict analytically without focusing on one single version of the story. He is interested in many fields, but especially Education Studies.

Fun fact: A book Yalled read this year that he liked was the novel *Baho!* by Roland Rugero, a Burundian author.



Shalom Iteriteka's family hails from Ngozi Province and fled to Bujumbura shortly after he was born. Shalom has many musical talents including singing, and playing the guitar and keyboard. Some interesting things he learned about at Tujenge this year are in the fields of genetics, philosophy of life, and disability studies.

Fun fact: Shalom is currently leading a project called Your Disability Does Not Define Your Future, raising money to help a school for disabled children in Gitega Province.



Aimée Darlène Izere and her family are from the Province of Gitega, where she studied in the Math and Physics track in secondary school. She loves to read, and has recently read the book *From Bloodshed to Hope in Burundi*. One interesting thing that she has learned about at Tujenge is the philosophy of life. She thinks she would like to study Electrical Engineering. In December 2023, Darlène was admitted to Northwestern University.

Fun fact: Darlène enjoys writing slam poetry.



Précieuse Ingabire, born in Bujumbura of parents from Cibitoke and Gitega Provinces, studied Math and Physics in secondary school. Her favorite topic at Tujenge this year was philosophy, in particular the definition of “happiness” and the meaning of life. At university she wants to study Mathematics and Astronomy. One day she would like to try windsurfing.

Fun fact: Unsolved math problems keep Précieuse up at night; she will even dream of them when she falls asleep.



Don Kelly Nkurunziza is from Bujumbura and studied in the Math-Physics track in secondary school. He smiles a lot, and likes to see the people around him happy. At Tujenge, topics he has found interesting are philosophy of life and disability studies. For university, he is thinking about studying either Computer Engineering or Anthropology. He likes programming and knows C, C++, Python, Dart, JavaScript, HTML, and CSS.

Fun fact: Don Kelly co-founded a blog project called Kororwa Burundi with another Tujenge student, Rosine, to highlight the cultural life of Burundians.



Rosine Marie Ininahazwe is from Gitega Province, where she studied in the Biology-Chemistry-Earth Sciences track in school. At Tujenge, she has enjoyed learning about the history of social movements, including feminism, and the discourses around achieving equal opportunities for all members of society. She is thinking of majoring in Biochemical Engineering.

Fun fact: Rosine enjoys creative writing, where she likes to explore cultural issues and question social norms. She is co-founder of the Korerwa blog project with Don Kelly.



Alain Magayane and his parents hail from neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo. He is Tujenge's first Congolese student. This year at Tujenge, he has learned a lot about the history of the feminist movement and disability studies, and he is quickly gaining proficiency in Burundian Sign Language. He studied in the Pedagogy track in secondary school, and hopes to major in Psychology at university.

Fun fact: Alain is conversational or fluent in ten languages.



Marc Arsène Iradukunda is from Rumonge Province and was in the Science track in secondary school. At Tujenge, he has enjoyed learning Burundian Sign Language and taking classes about the history of feminism. He also likes to perform traditional Burundian dance. At university, he would like to study Biomedical Engineering.

Fun fact: Marc's favorite books are those that explore the lives of people in different cultures, such as *Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes*.



Eric Nkurunziza and his family are from the northern province of Kanyanza. He plans to major in Biochemistry and at Tujenge, he has enjoyed learning about disability studies and participating in the Burundian Sign Language Club. Every Wednesday he participates in a fellowship with the deaf community in Bujumbura. To unwind and destress, he likes to play football. In December 2023, Eric was admitted to Oberlin College.

Fun fact: When he was seven, Eric worked as a fish seller to help support his family.



Don Destin Iriho is from Cibitoke Province. He was in the Science track in secondary school, and wants to study Computer Science and Astronomy at university. Destin hopes to build the first astronomical observatory in Burundi. This year he enjoyed reading the novel *The African Equation*, and among his favorite topics at Tujenge are philosophy of life and the disability rights movement. In December 2023, Destin was admitted to Brown University.

Fun fact: Don Destin would like to try skydiving one day.



Belle Ange Edissa Ngabirano is from Gitega Province, where she studied in the Biology-Chemistry-Earth Sciences track in school. She enjoys dancing to traditional Burundian music, and this year at Tujenge she enjoyed the Peace Studies class and learning about moral philosophy. She has also been learning Burundian Sign Language, and she plays a leadership role in several environmental projects. She hopes to study Environmental Science at university.

Fun fact: Belle Ange was the winner of the Miss Ngoma competition in 2022, and was first-runner up for Miss Burundi.



Lyse Claudia Irera is from Muyinga Province, and studied in the Biology-Chemistry-Earth Science track in Ngozi. At Tujenge this year, she has enjoyed learning about the environment, climate change, land use, and natural resources. She is undecided on what she will major in, but is interested in STEM fields and Public Health. She also cares about reproductive and sexual health education in Burundi.

Fun fact: Lyse is a talented soprano.



Raoul Jonathan Nyenimigabo is from Kirundo Province, and wants to major in Economics. This year he enjoyed learning about the disability rights movement and the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. He also reread *The Lord of the Flies*; this time in English. He loves to cook and he sings opera. What keeps him up at night: the question of how to help Burundi become a middle-income country. In December 2023, Raoul was admitted to Yale University.

Fun fact: Raoul speaks seven languages, and has been studying German for several years. He regularly attends Oktoberfest in Bujumbura.



Cadie Naomie Muhoza is from Bujumbura and studied in the Biology-Chemistry-Earth Science track in high school. She has discovered many intellectually enriching things at Tujenge, the feminist movement and the writings of Angela Davis among them. She likes meditation and star-gazing, and enjoys swimming so much that some of her friends call her Aquawoman. She plans to study International Relations or Public Policy at university.

Fun fact: Naomie's hidden talent is the ability to clasp her hands together and perform a 360-degree shoulder rotation.



Jean Christophe Niyongere is from Ngozi Province, and studied in the Water and Forests section at the Agricultural Technical School of Burundi. He hopes to pursue his university studies in Silviculture and Forest Management or Soil Science. This year at Tujenge, he has learned a lot about disability rights and evolution, as well as how to engage in class discussions and ask good questions.

Fun fact: Jean Christophe is a cultivator and is currently managing an agricultural project at his village in Ngozi as well as growing vegetables at the student house.



Karen Tuyizigire is from Bujumbura and majored in STEM courses at the English-language Discovery School. The topics she has learned most about this year at Tujenge are feminism, evolution, and social conformity. She plays guitar and is a talented singer and performer. She also participates in slam poetry competitions, performing poems that she composed herself. At university, she would like to study Economics.

Fun fact: This year Karen enjoyed reading Orwell's *1984* and Steinbeck's *East of Eden*.



Thierry Butoyi, whose mother is from Kirundo, is from Bujumbura and studied in the STEM track at the English-language Discovery School. At Tujenge he has enjoyed learning about different economic systems and the ways in which poverty is created. He is a music producer and also plays the guitar. This year he read *Man's Search for Meaning* by Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl. He is considering Economics, Environmental Studies, or Computer Science as majors at university.

Fun fact: Thierry would one day like to see up close how airplanes are made.



Jovith Ntiranyibagira is from Rumonge Province and was enrolled in the Biology-Chemistry-Earth Sciences track in secondary school. She doesn't sweat the little things, and on the weekends she enjoys running and spending time with her friends. One of the topics she found most interesting to learn about at Tujenge this year was the history of feminism. At university, Jovith would like to major in Biochemistry.

Fun fact: Jovith can speak five languages.



Félicien Bukuru is from Bujumbura but his mother hails from Kirundo Province. At Discovery School, he was in the STEM track, and at Tujenge he has learned a lot about climate change. He is thinking of majoring in Business Administration. He is a talented musician, traveling through his memories when he plays the piano or keyboard. This year he read *The Clockwork Universe*, a book about Isaac Newton and his many inventions.

Fun fact: Félicien enjoys challenging his own thoughts by reading science books.



Verité Gahimbare is from Bujumbura Province. Some of her favorite topics at Tujenge this year have been environmental economics and the unit of Peace Studies on Ireland. She loves to read and recently enjoyed the novel *A Girl is a Body of Water*. At Tujenge she is working with a group of her classmates on a research project called Ubuntu to detail the history of conflict in Burundi. At university, she would like to major in Anthropology.

Fun fact: Verité dreams of going on the ultimate road trip: the Pan-American Highway.



Audace Irivuzimana is from Rumonge Province and studied in the Math-Physics track in secondary school. Two of the topics he learned the most from this year at Tujenge were human evolution and the definition of feminism. He likes to play devil's advocate and participate in debates in order to get to the bottom of an issue. At university, Audace wants to study Computer Science.

Fun fact: Audace gives free English and Swahili lessons for Kirundi speakers on Facebook, and teaches English at local English clubs.



Emmanuel Butoyi is from Bujumbura. He studied in the Pharmacy track and placed first in the entire country on the Pharmacy National Exam. At Tujenge, he's enjoyed learning about critical thinking, evolution, disability rights, environmental studies, and peace studies. What keeps him up at night are the financial struggles of his mother and siblings. He can play the piano, and he knows some traditional Burundian dances.

Fun fact: Emmanuel would like to see the ocean one day, and take photos of the sunset from the shore.



Lucky Gateka is from Bujumbura, and studied in the Biology-Chemistry-Earth Science track in secondary school. She would like to major in Computer Science at university. Among the many interesting things she has learned at Tujenge this year, Burundian Sign Language has been one of her favorites.

Fun fact: One day, Lucky would like to have the chance to swim with the dolphins.

Tujenge Staff and Interns

The staff and interns at Tujenge keep the wheels turning. The extent to which Tujenge alumni have contributed to the smooth functioning of the program – and new projects introduced in 2023, especially – cannot be underestimated.

Kevin Bigirimana, Eliphase Irankunda, Piaguette Muhimpundu, and Cherif Bukuru – all interns from Cohort 5 – were instrumental in assisting the Program Director with the first stages of a mixed methods study of Tujenge early on in the year. Their insights and their swift grasp of both qualitative and quantitative research methods meant that the study got off to a strong start.

With the support of our interns throughout the year, Tujenge students were able to access the classroom on weekends, have quiet and secure spaces in which to take online tests, and benefit from the guidance and mentorship of Tujenge alumni. Kevin and Eliphase, especially, stepped in to perform the functions of Tujenge staff when staff were traveling or otherwise unavailable. All the interns helped to register donated books for Tujenge's small library, and were instrumental in providing professional translated transcripts and documents for Cohort 7's college applications.

All of the interns gained valuable work experience through their internships this year, including the opportunity to teach. Eliphase had the chance to prepare and co-teach Physics classes and led a class discussion on critical thinking, Kevin taught a class on education, and Juste – as an activist in the deaf community of Burundi – taught a class on Disability Studies. Noé Vyizigiro (Cohort 3) also did a semester-long internship this year and taught a class on Economics, based on his own university research.

Jean de Dieu Ndayishimiye and Justice Divine Ngendakumana (both Cohort 2) continue to administer the Tujenge Opportunity Fund, which is a fundraising campaign to support Tujenge alumni who have not received a scholarship. By the end of 2023, the Fund was supporting five scholars who were enrolled at universities in Burundi. Christian Hakizimana (Cohort 1) will join Tujenge as an IT specialist in 2024, and Jean de Dieu will be training for the role of College Counselor. Finally, Simpliste Ninahazimana (Cohort 1) has been with Tujenge since 2020, in charge of maintenance of the Tujenge student house. Simpliste has managed life at the student house with safety and security at the forefront of her mind.

The program teachers and staff – Neuilly Nziza, Dominic Nformi, David Bett, Brad Gasser, and all the guards and support staff – have also made invaluable contributions to the spirit and mission of Tujenge.



Dominic, Brad, Carol, and David with Gass Iyacu from Cohort 2

Special Events and Guest Speakers

Talent Show

In June, Cohorts 6 and 7 collaborated on the organization of a talent show. Among the performances was a karate demonstration, musical ensembles, a song performed in Burundian Sign Language, a play written and performed by the students, poetry slams, and a fashion show.



Cohorts 6 and 7 music performance



Cohort 7 emcee



Fashion Show



Scenes from the original play written and performed by Cohorts 6 and 7

Class Guests

In 2023, Cohorts 6 and 7 benefited from several guest speakers, including Tujenge alumni. Not including the Mini-Conference (see below), Cohort 7 in particular were fortunate to have class time with eight alumni over the course of the year, currently studying at or recently graduated from:

- Trinity College
- Northwestern University
- Swarthmore College (via Zoom)
- Ashesi University
- Ashoka University
- Catholic University of Eastern Africa
- University of Cape Town

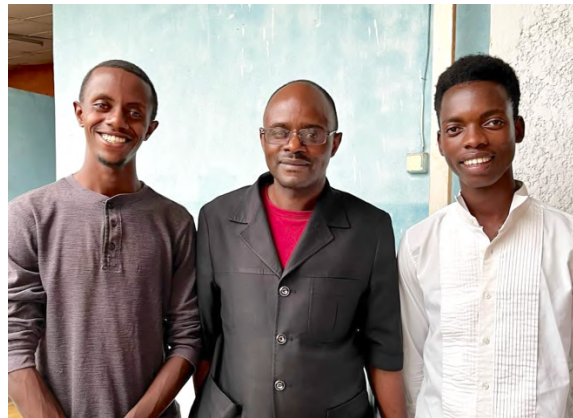
Alumni guests give current Tujenge students unique insights and important perspectives on life as a college student, whether they are enrolled abroad or in Burundi. The Tujenge Scholars have an opportunity to ask the alumni about academics, culture, and social life. The alumni visits, and occasions for alumni to formally present their research and experiences (see the next section of this report), are also valuable opportunities for students to get a sense from their peers of what is involved in a research project and what is possible and achievable regardless of where they may pursue their tertiary education.

Cohort 6 and 7 students have had the opportunity to hear from other kinds of guests as well. In a science class on emerging research in the treatment of mental conditions such as depression, Cohort 6 had the opportunity via Zoom to ask questions and talk with the Program Director's parents – one is a professor at Johns Hopkins University and an MD/MPH that does research on mental health and depression in the elderly, and one was a pediatric nurse for over forty years and currently a clinical instructor of nursing. For their African Literature class, Cohort 6 also got to hear from Professor Marie-Thérèse Toyi of the English Department at the University of Burundi. The class was assigned to read her novel, *Weep Not, Refugee*, and were able to have the unique opportunity of discussing a book with its author.



Students with their Literature teacher, Mr. Nformi, and Professor Toyi

In Cohort 7's Peace Studies class, a Congolese researcher, Jean-Louis Nzweve, offered to share his expertise and answer questions about local peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo. And in a Peace Studies unit on the period of history in Ireland known as The Troubles, a friend of the Program Director who grew up in Northern Ireland in the 1990s and lived through the signing of the Good Friday Agreement visited the class via WhatsApp video to share his perspectives and experiences.



Juste (Cohort 6) and Eric (Cohort 7) with guest speaker Jean-Louis Nzweve, from DRC



Cohort 7 discusses Ireland in Peace Studies class

Tujenge Mini-Conference

In June 2023, Tujenge piloted a promising new kind of event. Taking advantage of the presence of alumni in Bujumbura the Program Director organized a prototype of an academic conference, which took place in the Tujenge classroom. Four Tujenge alumni presented their research with Cohorts 6 and 7 in audience. The presenters and their presentation titles were as follows:

- Vumilia Hicakibuko (Cohort 3), African Leadership College, Mauritius: Opportunities and Connections at University
- Désiré Hatungimana (Cohort 1), Africa University, Zimbabwe: The Effect of Organic Fertilizers on the Growth, Yield, and Quality of Onions
- Clovis Hatungimana (Cohort 2), Quest University, Canada: Monitoring and Evaluation: Assessment of Educational Programs
- Olivier Nifasha (Cohort 3), African Leadership University, Rwanda: Vertical Farming Technology for Future Agriculture: Hydroponic System

All four of these Tujenge Scholars had recently received Mastercard Foundation grants to carry out their projects. Cohort 6 and 7 students got a lot out of the experience, and several said they learned a great deal from hearing about Tujenge alumni research. One vision for this initiative is to scale it up and widen participation by inviting not just Tujenge alumni but also university students in the region to present their research on themed panels modeled after a traditional academic conference. This form of outreach would give Tujenge Scholars the chance to network with other young scholars already working in the fields they are interested in, and would also allow Tujenge to build relationships with the broader community of academics and scholars in Bujumbura. A video of the mini-conference may be accessed using the following link: bit.ly/Tujenge-Mini-Conference.



Vumilia (Cohort 3) presents her advice on networking for opportunities as a university student, June 2023

Student Projects

Beach Cleanup (Cohorts 5, 6, and 7)

In early 2023, Harmony Niyongabo (Cohort 6) attended the Pan-Africa Youth Leadership Program, sponsored by the U.S. State Department, and was awarded a grant to organize and carry out a leadership project. Harmony successfully organized a beach cleanup after discussing the project with the owner of Safi Beach in Bujumbura. She mobilized Tujenge staff and her colleagues in Cohorts 6 and 7, as well as a few from Cohort 5, for two beach cleanups on February 18 and March 11. Harmony hired buses to transport volunteers to and from Tujenge, bought trash bags and gloves for picking up trash, and managed the transportation of garbage to waste management facilities and plastic to the local recycling plant. A short video about her project can be seen using the following link: bit.ly/Harmony-Safi-Beach.



Harmony, pictured here in the purple top, organized and led the beach cleanups

Korerwa Blog Project (Cohort 7)

Rosine and Don Kelly, in the current cohort, began planning a blog project that will showcase writing, poetry, and other forms of creative work by young Burundians, beginning with pieces by their classmates at Tujenge. The site will be multi-lingual, publishing in Kirundi, Swahili, French, and English. Don Kelly will manage the site, making use of his programming skills, and Rosine will bring her talents in creative writing to manage content. Everyone at Tujenge is excited to see this project get off the ground.

Plastics Project (Cohort 7)

Naomie and Raoul presented a project proposal to Tujenge staff to encourage the organization to replace liquid soap in plastic bottles with bar soap in order to reduce the amount of plastic waste generated by Tujenge. They are still in the process of organizing this project, but they have already taken the first steps of asking for feedback on the proposal and approaching Tujenge housekeeping staff with the idea. If successfully implemented, it will be a small step toward reducing the amount of plastic that, eventually, often ends up in Lake Tanganyika.

Student House Garden (Cohort 7)

At the Tujenge student house, Raoul and Jean Christophe are cultivating a garden. Simon, the cook, and Tujenge staff living at the compound have been instructed to place organic waste like banana peels into a specific bag. Periodically, Raoul and Jean Christophe collect the organic waste from the Tujenge compound, which they transform into compost to use in the garden. Raoul, who planted roses with his grandfather as a child, is growing four varieties of roses. Jean Christophe, who already has sophisticated knowledge of agriculture, is growing *lengalenga* – a locally popular, spinach-like vegetable – and plans to plant red onions after the winter break. Désiré Hatungimana, a Tujenge alumnus from Cohort 1 who majored in Agriculture and Natural Resources, visits the student house on occasion to give advice and assist with the garden.



Raoul's first rose blossom at the student house

Ubuntu Project (Cohorts 6 and 7)

Six Cohort 7 students and one alumna from Cohort 6 were recruited earlier in the year by Raoul, Verité, and Naomie to embark on a research project whose aim is to explore the philosophical and practical applications of Ubuntu to the Burundian conflict context. The group is still in the early stages of developing a robust research plan, but they have decided they will take a largely qualitative approach to the research in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the history of conflict in Burundi than that of the one-sided narratives that have been passed down. The research team is mixed and represents all three ethnicities, and consists of four young women and three young men. They plan to use semi-structured qualitative interviews and other ethnographic methods for this project, and have solicited the advice of the Program Director, who used these methods in her PhD fieldwork.

Burundian Sign Language Club (Cohorts 6 and 7)

Toward the end of the summer, Tujenge alum Juste Nsavyamahoro, who is fluent in Burundian Sign Language (BSL) and has been an advocate for the deaf community in Burundi for several years, noticed there was great interest among students and Tujenge interns in learning BSL. He then began teaching BSL twice a week after classes, and this BSL club has been a great success. Juste's cousin, who is deaf, visited the club in October so that the students could practice their BSL with him. Juste will leave Tujenge in April to begin his studies at USIU-Africa, but he hopes to continue the sign language club with Cohorts 7 and 8 for the first few months of 2024. During the summer, Juste also taught a Liberal Arts class on Disability Studies and the disability rights movement.



Cohort 7 students in the Burundian Sign Language Club

Cohort 6 Graduation

The graduation ceremony for Cohort 6 on June 24, organized by Program Manager Neuilly Nziza, was a great success. The ceremony began with the procession of Cohort 6 followed by an opera performance by Karen and Raoul and a traditional Burundian dance by Cohort 7 students. There were speeches by the Program Manager, Executive Director, outgoing Program Director, incoming Program Director, and a Cohort 6 class representative. There were also leadership awards presented to two exceptional students from Cohort 6. A video of the graduation, with time-stamps, is available at this link:

bit.ly/TSP-Cohort-6-Graduation.



Harmony Niyongabo and Juste Nsavyamahoro with their Outstanding Achievement in Leadership awards

Selected Alumni Updates

Hatungimana Foundation for Organic Farming

Earlier this year, Désiré Hatungimana (Cohort 1) received a Mastercard Foundation Entrepreneurship Fund grant for his organic farming project, having graduated from Africa University in Agriculture and Natural Resources on a Mastercard Foundation scholarship. He does research into finding affordable and accessible ways to make organic fertilizer, and has been teaching farmers in his home community how to make and use them. He hopes to establish an educational center where farmers from other communities can also be trained to make their own fertilizer. A short video about Désiré's project can be viewed at the following link: bit.ly/Hatungimana-Foundation.

Data Science for the Public Good: Bangladesh Flood Study

Sotaire Kwizera (Cohort 3), a student at Berea College studying Economics and Computer Science with a concentration in Data Analytics and Modeling, was part of a research team this year which is working to publish a study entitled "Association between Prenatal Exposure to Flooding and Child Health Outcomes: Evidence from Bangladesh." The research team is also composed of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty from Virginia Tech, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and Virginia Commonwealth University. The aim of the study is to provide data which can be used to design interventions that will alleviate the adverse effects of flooding on child health. More about the study can be accessed at this link: <https://bit.ly/Sotaire-Flood-Study>.

TechBridge Burundi

Pamela Niyongere and Divine Nkurunziza (Cohort 2) both recently graduated from Ashesi University in Ghana with degrees in Computer Science. At Ashesi, Pamela won Best Entrepreneurship Capstone and the President's Award for Scholarship, Leadership, and Citizenship. Divine is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Information Technology at Carnegie Mellon University Africa. Pamela is currently Program Coordinator at Menya Accelerator, a nonprofit educational organization in Bujumbura. Pamela and Divine recently co-founded TechBridge Burundi with the support of the Ashesi Venture Incubator. The aim of TechBridge Burundi is to provide computer and digital literacy skills to marginalized communities in Burundi in order to bridge the digital divide. From their project summary: "The core belief that drives TechBridge is that equipping the youth with essential tech skills can catalyze the transformation of Burundi's future workforce and enable the country to stride confidently into the digital age." A summary of TechBridge Burundi profile can be read at this link: bit.ly/TechBridge-Burundi.

Abarundikazi Period Movement and Ubuntu Mu Kwezi

This organization began when its founders were still Cohort 2 and 3 Tujenge Scholars, and has continued since 2019. They got off the ground with some initial funding from Women Deliver, headquartered in New York, and have been going ever since, led primarily by Charité Igirimbabazi, Milka Ininahazwe, and Jean-Luc Ishimwe from Cohort 3 – as well as Allickan Niragira, a mutual friend of theirs with experience in the nonprofit sector. Charité is currently studying Biomedical Engineering at Dartmouth College, Jean-Luc is studying Physics at Swarthmore College, and Milka is studying Mechanical Engineering at Lafayette College. They have done an impressive job of keeping up their community efforts at home in Burundi while still abroad in the United States. APM aims to combat period poverty and stigma by

pursuing sexual health education to rural girls in Burundi, as well as providing washable sanitary pads and teaching girls how to make their own. They are addressing a key imbalance in the social standing of girls and their ability to access education in Burundi, especially in rural areas, as the lack of knowledge and resources means that many girls must stay home from school for several days each month. Social stigma and myths about menstruation pose further barriers to gender equity. The open discourse and health education provided by APM seeks to dispel these myths and dismantle these barriers. According to APM's most recent data (December 2023), the group has distributed close to 3,000 reusable sanitary napkins and 8,000 bars of soap; educated over 1,500 young girls in five provinces of Burundi; and, through partnerships with other organizations, held workshops that have reached 4,000 girls and women.

In 2023, Jean-Luc was awarded funding from the Lang Opportunity Scholarship at Swarthmore College to implement his own project with the same aims, Ubuntu Mu Kwezi, which will collaborate with APM and other community-based organizations to create local chapters of APM in three of the most impoverished regions of Burundi.

Space-Ed Africa and the EmpowerHER Summit

Alumni from Cohorts 3, 4, 5, and 6 cofounded an NGO, Space-Ed Africa, one initiative of which is the EmpowerHER Summit. The aim of the EmpowerHER Summit is to empower women to pursue careers in business or the nonprofit sector. A pilot of the Summit was held in Bujumbura in December, with several students from Cohort 7 in attendance. Participants analyzed the economic situation in Burundi and the actual and potential contribution of women to the economy. The Summit facilitated sessions on IT and explored how it can help Burundi develop. The participants worked in groups to come to an understanding of how programming, artificial intelligence, and machine learning could contribute to their business startup or NGO project. Awards were distributed for the best projects, and Space-Ed Africa is also helping to secure funds for the projects from local and international programs that support youth. Among the ideas discussed at the Summit was an initiative that would use AI to detect diseases in plants and help farmers decide early what actions to take. In the future, they hope to scale Space-Ed Africa up with mentorship programs and network-building initiatives. These connections would offer solutions to the challenges Burundian women face, such as financial dependence, and lay the groundwork for ongoing empowerment. The cofounders of Space-Ed Africa are Matchad Mugisha (Cohort 3), Delicia Queen Mumbe (Cohort 4), Paul Claudel Izabayo (Cohort 4), Jodick Ndayisenga (Cohort 4), Cherif Bukuru (Cohort 5), Danny Ndikuriyo (Cohort 5), and Hollande Nduwayo (Cohort 6).



Participants of EmpowerHER with their graduation certificates



Lyse (Cohort 7) at the EmpowerHER Summit

Selected 2023-24 Admissions and Matriculations

Jerome Bizimana (Cohort 4)	Northwestern University (United States)
Cherif Bukuru (Cohort 5)	United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Gyslaine Akimana (Cohort 5)	United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Kevin Bigirimana (Cohort 5)	Ashesi University (Ghana)
Nobel Bitangimana (Cohort 5)	Ashesi University (Ghana)
Yango Baricako (Cohort 5)	University of Burundi (Burundi)
Piaguette Muhimpundu (Cohort 5)	Hope University (Burundi)
Mathias Ndayiragije (Cohort 6)	American University of Beirut (Lebanon)
Yvan Darcy Iteriteka (Cohort 6)	American University of Beirut (Lebanon)
Holiness Igiraneza (Cohort 6)	Wesleyan University (United States)
Pie Surwavuba (Cohort 6)	United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Florence Nshimirimana (Cohort 6)	United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Innocent Ndayizeye (Cohort 6)	United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Juste Nsavyamahoro (Cohort 6)	United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Deborah Ndawayesu (Cohort 6)	United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Faith Atieno (Cohort 6)	Harvard University (United States)
Tharcisse Ntirandekura (Cohort 6)	Oberlin College (United States)
Pacifique Nsabumukiza (Cohort 6)	Kırıkkale University (Turkey)
Hollande Nduwayo (Cohort 6)	Ashesi University (Ghana)
Carlène Mpawenayo (Cohort 6)	Ashesi University (Ghana)
Raoul Jonathan Nyenimigabo (Cohort 7)	Yale University (United States)
Aimée Darlène Izere (Cohort 7)	Northwestern University (United States)
Don Destin Iriho (Cohort 7)	Brown University (United States)
Eric Nkurunziza (Cohort 7)	Oberlin College (United States)



Kevin (Cohort 5) and Hollande (Cohort 6)

Selected University Graduations 2023

Eliel Dushime (Cohort 1)	BA Computer Science Harvard University (United States)
Désiré Hatungimana (Cohort 1)	BS Agriculture and Natural Resources Africa University (Zimbabwe)
Jérédie Sinzinkayo (Cohort 1)	BS Actuarial Science North Central College (United States)
Christa Ishimwe (Cohort 2)	Double major in Math and Letters, minor in Jewish Studies Wesleyan University (United States)
Jim Colin Irakoze (Cohort 2)	BS Actuarial Science Catholic University of Eastern Africa (Kenya)
Aarnie Dushime (Cohort 2)	BA Economics Carleton College (United States)
Axel Irikungoma (Cohort 2)	BE Electrical and Computer Engineering Vanderbilt University (United States)
Osian Nzoyisenga (Cohort 2)	BS Food Science and Technology Cornell University (United States)
Clovis Hatungimana (Cohort 2)	BS Statistics, BA Education Quest University (Canada)
Jean Trésor Haragakiza (Cohort 2)	BS Diagnostic Medical Imaging Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana)
Joyelle Ndikumana (Cohort 2)	BS Computer Science Ashoka University (India)
Justice Ngendakumana (Cohort 2)	BA Marketing and Management Université du Lac Tanganyika (Burundi)
Nelson Kagimbi (Cohort 2)	BS Computer Science Northwestern University (United States)
Divine Nkurunziza (Cohort 2)	BS Computer Science Ashesi University (Ghana)
Pamela Niyongere (Cohort 2)	BTech Computer Science Ashesi University (Ghana)
Eliseus Bamporineza (Cohort 2)	BA International Relations United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Jean de Dieu Ndayishimiye (Cohort 2)	PGD Management and Entrepreneurship University of Cape Town (South Africa)

From the Program Director

Diversity

Tujenge values diversity for several reasons. The first is to do with the organization's overall educational mission, which not only includes furthering the education of students who, in the Burundian context, are already relatively privileged and proficient in English, but also giving opportunities to brilliant students from marginalized communities to pursue their education; whether they are prepared for a tertiary education in English or would benefit from the Tujenge Scholars Program before joining a university in Burundi. Second, diversity is crucial to two of Tujenge's core pillars – critical thinking, and peacebuilding and dialogue. A classroom that is diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic background, province of origin, and gender means a classroom with a multitude of perspectives. This challenges students to question their assumptions, recognize their own biases, and learn to understand different points of view. Within the safety of the classroom, students of all three ethnicities can discuss the history of conflict in their own country in an analytical way. The students draw on the media literacy and critical thinking skills taught earlier in the year to recognize propaganda and one-sided narratives, so that by the third semester they are ready to take a critical approach to understanding different political viewpoints in Burundi. A diverse classroom is essential for achieving these learning goals.

Finally, in a less theoretical sense, the diversity of the classroom compels students to learn how to live and work with fellow youth who are very different from themselves. The environment of a school, where they must think like scholars, gives them the space to explore political, social, economic, and ethnic differences in a productive way and without fear. Ethnicity is omnipresent in Burundi, yet at the same time discussing it openly is taboo. By befriending each other and bursting decades-old stereotypes passed down from older generations, the diversity of the classroom is meant to contribute, at least on a small scale, to building a future generation of leaders who will forge a new direction for the country in terms of creating a lasting peace. Whether they become biochemists, entrepreneurs, anthropologists, computer programmers, or government ministers – in whatever sector they pursue their studies and careers, Tujenge alumni will be ready to combat discrimination and hate. This emphasis on diversity is what makes Tujenge special, in that it is not focused solely on the number of students admitted to universities abroad.

When students do go abroad, particularly to join liberal arts programs at universities in North America, this year-and-a-half long acclimation to a seminar-style classroom environment prepares them for the kinds of reading assignments, discussions, and classroom diversity they may experience as an undergraduate. All core teaching staff have graduate degrees as well as university teaching experience, from Cameroon and the United States.

Cohort 7 by the Numbers:



Determining Metrics for Success

Tujenge's metrics for success are based on the four main pillars of the Scholars Program:

- Peacebuilding and Dialogue
- Critical Thinking
- Redefining Leadership
- English Proficiency

University access is one purpose of these four pillars – along with preparing students for leadership roles, instilling in students an ability to contemplate what it means to be a global citizen, and orienting students to think about what they can contribute to their country to make it a peaceful, productive member of the international community. English is the global lingua franca of science and academia, and Burundi is the only member of the East African Community where English is not a functionally official language (though it was declared as such in 2014). Therefore, if Burundi is to emerge in the region as an economic and political force, its future leaders will need to be proficient in English. Students who attend university abroad are expected to return to Burundi to contribute to the future of their country.

If access to tertiary education is the metric for success, then thus far, 100% of Tujenge Scholars have matriculated to university, not counting alumni who are still applying to schools. This is not insignificant in a country where gross enrollment in tertiary studies is only about 6%, according to the most recent World Bank data.¹ Because of the diversity of the students selected for the program, metrics of success are based on where a student ends up relative to where they started; not relative to their classmates. For a Twa student to make it to university at all, for example, is a remarkable achievement. All four of Tujenge's Twa graduates have matriculated to university, and two have gone abroad on Mastercard Foundation Scholarships. Former refugees, internally displaced students, and students from rural, marginalized socioeconomic backgrounds have all matriculated to university in Burundi, on the Continent, and in many cases to North America. Tujenge offers a chance for high-achieving students of any background to rise relative to where they currently are.

Mixed Methods Study

In January 2023, the incoming Program Director initiated a mixed methods evaluation of the Tujenge Scholars Program. The goal of the study is threefold:

1. To establish ways of measuring student progress in the four pillars above and generate data and evaluations that may be conveyed in a report to Tujenge's Board of Directors;
2. To use these data and evaluations to craft a summary that may be published on the Tujenge website for public view, for university admissions offices, and shared with potential new donors or Board Members; and
3. To use the data for an academic study on Tujenge that may be published in an academic journal.

Research has thus far included an initial exploration of the literature on how other educational organizations have measured progress in abstract processes such as “critical thinking”; research on mixed methods approaches; the design of a quantitative survey and of a semi-structured qualitative interview map; a review of ethnographic methods such as participant-observation; the completion of five focus group interviews with Cohort 6 to test the qualitative interview maps; and the completion of four qualitative interviews with Tujenge alumni from Cohorts 3, 4, and 6.

¹ <https://tradingeconomics.com/burundi/school-enrollment-tertiary-percent-gross-wb-data.html>

Tujenge interns from Cohort 5 assisted in jump-starting this research. They have brought valuable insights to the project, especially as participant-observers who have been through the program. A student from Cohort 2, who attended Quest University in Canada, has also been assisting remotely, as a major part of his undergraduate studies was to do with the mixed methods evaluation of educational programs. Finally, the Program Director's father, who teaches a course on mixed methods research at Johns Hopkins University, has been volunteering to give feedback on the research approach.

Vision for 2024 and Upcoming Changes

2024 holds many promises for Tujenge. In November and December 2023, approximately 50 interviews for Cohort 8 were conducted from an applicant pool of 191. From the interviews, 20 candidates were selected to join the Scholars Program. There are several exciting ideas and changes that will be coming in the following year.

New Staff Members

Tujenge plans to welcome two new staff members in 2024, both Tujenge alumni. David Bett, the Lead College Counsellor, plans to return permanently to Kenya by 2025, and has committed to training Jean de Dieu Ndayishimiye (Cohort 2) to take his place. Jean de Dieu studied Management and Entrepreneurship at the post-graduate level, and before leaving for his one-year program in South Africa at the beginning of the year, was the creator and manager of the Tujenge Opportunity Fund GoFundMe page. He is also the founder of his own social enterprise, Umwizero. Jean de Dieu has consistently proved himself to be a competent and deadline-oriented manager, and Tujenge staff were unanimous in their enthusiasm for taking him on board.

The organization will also welcome Christian Hakizimana (Cohort 1), a Computer Engineering graduate of Ashesi University, to replace our current IT specialist. Christian will train with the current IT specialist for the rest of 2023 to get a sense of how the internal Tujenge network operates, and he will also manage the Tujenge website and its transition to the Wordpress editor. It is difficult in Burundi to find IT team members who mesh with Tujenge's mission and spirit, thus Christian will also be a welcome addition to the office.

Increased Alumni Engagement and Updates

Early in 2023, the incoming Program Director began building a WhatsApp group called the Tujenge Alumni Network. To date, 95 alumni have joined the group. As WhatsApp is so ubiquitously used on the Continent and among international students abroad, the aim is to have at least all students who have completed the Tujenge program join the group. This is a place for Tujenge alumni to share news and opportunities with each other, as well as a place for the Program Director to stay in touch with alumni and organize events such as conferences or alumni presentations.

More Updates to the Website

With Christian coming on board in 2024 and the STEM Instructor's knowledge of programming, the Tujenge Scholars Program website is already undergoing much-needed changes. Inaccuracies will be corrected and program text edited to more clearly reflect Tujenge's mission, and new photos have been added to supplement the existing photos from past cohorts. The Program Director also hopes to add more personal profiles of Tujenge Scholars, beginning with Cohorts 7 and 8, to complement the aggregate

economic and academic profiles that are already published on the website. Finally, with increased alumni engagement, there are plans to update the website periodically with alumni news – university graduations, grant awards, research projects, and other events and activities that may be of interest. Existing alumni projects and updates were too numerous to provide a comprehensive set of profiles for this report, but the website presents an ideal opportunity to keep track of how Tujenge alumni are contributing to their country.

Academic Conference

The mini-conference held in June 2023 was a great success, and if time and resources allow, the Program Director would like to scale it up and organize a more traditionally-styled academic conference including a call for papers and themed panels with moderators. A low-budget version of this might consist of a Tujenge-only conference, where alumni who are in Bujumbura present their work to the current cohorts. A more ambitious project would be to open the call to papers to the academic community in Bujumbura more broadly, and hold the event at a conference center or a space at the University of Burundi. This would give scholars working in similar areas an opportunity to network.

Engagement with the HALI Network

This year was the first opportunity for the incoming Program Director to attend the HALI Indaba, which was a great learning experience and opened the space to create and build relationships with other educational nonprofits on the Continent as well as admissions officers from universities in Ghana, Kenya, and the United States. With a BFA in Film and Video Editing from the School of Visual Arts in New York, the Program Director volunteered to be on the HALI Communications Committee to help with video production. The Indaba was energizing and in 2024 more effort will be made to maintain Tujenge's relationship with the HALI network.

Social Media

In 2023, Tujenge's social media presence began to revive. This has been particularly productive in terms of both alumni engagement and curating Tujenge's public image. Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms for young people in Burundi and, since setting up the Tujenge Instagram account in June, the account has gained 283 followers among which are approximately 86 Tujenge scholars and alumni. The Instagram account has also been a promising way of connecting with other HALI organizations and other educational programs in Burundi such as the Gitega International Academy. Many students and alumni are also active on Facebook, thus efforts have been made to keep the Tujenge Facebook page active as well. Finally, with the aim of producing short videos about Tujenge, student projects, and alumni updates, Tujenge's YouTube channel has also seen increased activity in 2023, though this was stymied by the poor internet connection over the summer and the onslaught of early decision application deadlines in October and November. In 2024, the Program Director hopes to make the production of short, publicly available videos a more regular feature of the YouTube channel, and will consult interns and students on the question of whether or not Tujenge should engage more with the public through other social media platforms such as TikTok and WhatsApp.

Many thanks to all who make Tujenge's work possible!