

Annual Report 2024



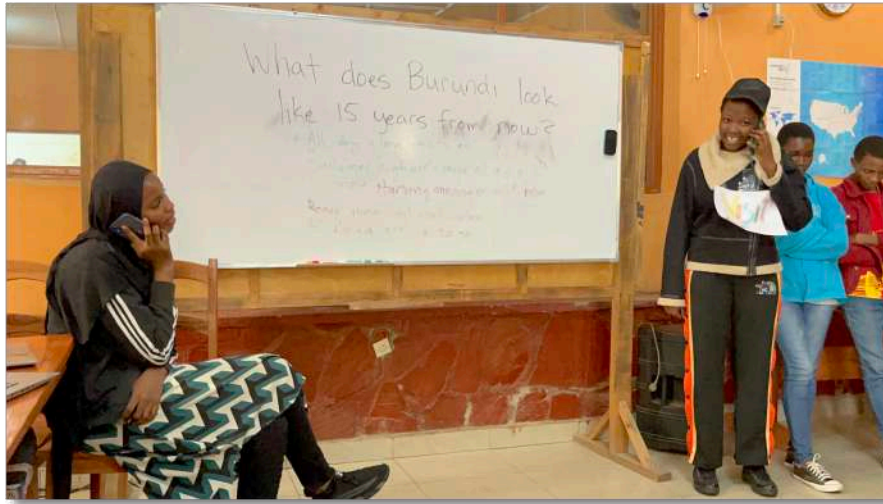
To the Board of Directors

It has been an eventful year for the Tujenge Scholars. Long-time Program Manager Neuilly Nziza has moved on to pursue new opportunities in Canada, and Jean de Dieu Ndayishimiye (Cohort 2) has taken on the role. Tujenge also welcomed a new College Counselor, Ashraf Munyi, and Burundian Sign Language teacher Jean Clinton Harimana to the family. Both Cohorts 7 and 8 benefitted from having special guests for class discussions, and all have shown tremendous growth in terms of academic aptitude and English proficiency. Many 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 7 and 8. Most importantly, Tujenge staff and students mourned the loss of their beloved friend, mentor, and STEM instructor, Bradley Gasser in July. His impact on the Scholars Program will never fade.

Tujenge thanks the Board for their continued generous support.

Orientation Week

Orientation took place at the end of January and was action-packed. Cohort 7, the senior cohort, and new 8 students were in attendance, as well as several alumni from Cohorts 5 and 6. Participants tested their engineering acuity with activities such as spaghetti towers and an egg drop, and they also had an opportunity to get creative through art projects and group responses to the prompt “What does Burundi look like 15 years from now?”



In response to the prompt, student groups presented visual art; performed original music; and wrote and performed skits. In one skit, which takes place 15 years in the future, Burundi is a global tourist attraction and students come from as far as the United States to attend Burundi’s world-renowned universities.

For one of the group’s musical performances, Thierry Butoyi from Cohort 7 led the composition of a song where the audience was asked to sing along with the chorus:

All along a long long way to go
Buildings high with people all along
No more starving, moving with hope
Roads above and roads below
All along a long long way to go

And of course, Tujenge orientation wouldn’t be complete without the egg drop and spaghetti towers!



Cohort 8 Fun Facts

Cohort 8 is the current cohort, who began the Scholars Program in January 2024 and will graduate in June 2025.

Biographies curated and composed by Guy Trésor Karikera of Cohort 8



Monia Marie Bamina is from Gitega. She did the Biology-Chemistry section at Ecole Internationale de Gitega. She sees Tujenge as a freedom space and she enjoys the music club and the digital literacy course.

Fun facts: Bamina is a songwriter, a singer, and a big fan of Aya Nakamura. She is currently learning Spanish



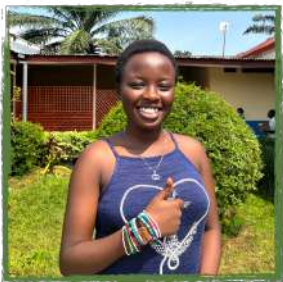
Becky Carmine Igiraneza is from Bujumbura. She did the Math-Physics section at Lycée du Saint Esprit. She would like to study Computer Science, particularly cybersecurity, at university. At Tujenge, she likes the Sign Language class and English with Dominic.

Fun facts: She would like to learn how to play the violin. She recently started doing yoga.



Naissa Bessie Izere is from Bujumbura. She did the Math-Physics section at Lycée du Saint Esprit. She wants to continue her studies in Biomedical Engineering. At Tujenge, she particularly enjoys the Sign Language and Music clubs. Bessie is a choir singer and she is learning to play the piano.

Fun fact: One of Bessie's dreams is to engineer her own car.



Carlène Bukuru is from Cibitoke. She studied Languages at Lycée Sainte Famille de Kinama. She would like to study law. Her favorite subject at Tujenge is the Liberal Arts seminar. She is an advocate for social justice. Carlène is also a talented artist; she enjoys drawing as well as arts and crafts.

Fun facts: Carlène is learning Korean. She would also like to learn how to surf one day.



Clerry Arakaza is from Bujumbura. He did the Math-Physics section at Petit Séminaire de Kanyosha. He is thinking of studying Civil Engineering at university. At Tujenge, he enjoys the Sign Language class and participating in the Sign Language Club.

Fun fact: Clerry is a very inquisitive person and likes to interrogate his own assumptions about the world.



Levy Gaël Ndayisenga is from Rutana. He studied Languages at Petit Séminaire Saint Pierre Apôtre de Mika. He wants to study Business Management. At Tujenge, he enjoys the Digital Literacy course with Jean de Dieu. He is also interested in Philosophy and History, and would like to one day visit the Amazon rainforest.

Fun facts: Gaël can dance Agasimbo; he is also a DJ.



Kericy Iribukumusavyi is from Gitega. She did the Biology-Chemistry section at Lycée Regina Pacis. She wants to study Business Management. At Tujenge, she enjoys English classes with Dominic. Kericy also writes and performs slam poetry.

Fun fact: One day Kericy would like to see the glaciers near Iceland.



Martha Bénitha Ikezwe is from Bubanza. She studied Economics at Lycée d'Excellence de Ngagara. At Tujenge, she especially enjoys the Digital Literacy class. Bénitha writes and performs slam poetry, and one day she would like to visit the Vatican museum in Rome.

Fun fact: Bénitha aspires to one day write her autobiography.



Michael Tuyizigire grew up in Lusaka, Zambia. He concentrated in STEM courses at the Discovery School in Bujumbura. He would like to study Computer Science at university. At Tujenge, he enjoyed Brad's Math class. He is also a talented guitarist and keyboard player.

Fun facts: Michael enjoys painting, and one day he would like to try scuba diving.



Sam Stéphane Nishimwe is from Bujumbura. He did the Math-Biology-Chemistry section at Petit Séminaire Virgo Fidelis in Rwanda. He wants to study Math at university. At Tujenge, he especially enjoys Peace Studies class with Carol. Sam likes to sing in the choir, and is learning to play the piano.

Fun facts: Sam is learning Latin. One of his dreams is to one day be able to observe a brain surgery.



Yvannie Chérissa Satia Iganze is from Bujumbura. She did the Math-Physics section at Lycée d'Excellence de Ngagara. At Tujenge, she enjoys Math and Sign Language classes and the Music Club. She enjoys playing basketball.

Fun fact: Satia loves to read about the history of humanity. She also loves reading the Sherlock Holmes stories.



Etoile "Star" Igiraneza is from Bujumbura. She studied Economics at Lycée du Saint Esprit and she would like to continue studying Economics at university. At Tujenge, she likes the way students learn Math and English; she also enjoys the Music Club. She likes to sing and is learning the piano.

Fun fact: Star imagines what it would be like to be on the jumbotron in Times Square.



Sephora Ndizeye Nakayo is from Bujumbura. She did the Biology-Chemistry section at Lycée du Saint Esprit. She would like to study a field like Pharmacy at university. At Tujenge, she enjoyed learning about Disability Studies, and she participates in the Sign Language Club.

Fun fact: Sephora would like to one day visit the Great Barrier Reef.



Tessie Irangabiye Mpundu is from Muyinga. She studied in the Biology-Chemistry section at Lycée SOS. At Tujenge, her favorite subject so far has been Disability Studies, where she liked learning about the Section 504 sit-in in the 1970s. She also enjoys reading biographies.

Fun fact: Tessie would like to perform in a professional theater one day.



Tharcisse Nahimana is from Karusi. He studied in the Biology-Chemistry section at Lycée Saint Augustin de Gitaramuka. He would like to study Physics at university. At Tujenge, he enjoys the Sign Language class and the Arabic Club. He likes to run and would like to participate in a marathon one day.

Fun fact: Tharcisse used to be a beekeeper.



Guy Trésor Karikera is from Muramvya. He did the Biology-Chemistry section at Ecole Saints Archanges de Ngozi. He would like to study Computer Science and Bioengineering at university. At Tujenge, he enjoys Media Literacy, Peace Studies, and Sign Language. In his spare time he enjoys reading fiction.

Fun fact: Trésor's goal is to come up with affordable digital solutions for managing chronic diseases, especially in emergency situations.



Yousra Hassan is from Bujumbura. She studied in the Biology-Chemistry section at Ecole Internationale de Bujumbura. She is thinking of doing a pre-medical course of study at university. At Tujenge, she enjoyed Brad's Math and Science classes. She also liked the unit on Disability Studies. One day she would like to create an association to help people with disabilities in Burundi.

Fun fact: Yousra is fluent in Arabic and loves to travel; one day she would like to visit Saudi Arabia.



Yves Tuyizere is from Kirundo. He did the Biology-Chemistry section at Petit Séminaire Saint Pie X of Muyinga. He is interested in a pre-medical course of study. Yves likes the pedagogical methods of Tujenge and he enjoyed the Liberal Arts unit on Disability Studies. He plays basketball, football, and handball; and he is a big fan of Real Madrid.

Fun fact: One day Yves would like to create an organization to help homeless children in Burundi.

Remembering Brad Gasser

On July 24, the Tujenge family lost their beloved STEM instructor, mentor, friend, and brother suddenly and unexpectedly. Brad had a profound understanding of Tujenge’s mission and contributed a great deal to shaping it.



Brad loved the song, quoted above, that students wrote during the 2024 Orientation in January. Thierry and Félicien (Cohort 7), both talented musicians, singers, and producers, refashioned the verses of the song in order to dedicate them to Brad; they did not change the chorus that he loved so much. They recorded the song in his memory, which you can listen to here: bit.ly/Ayot_Fesho_Long_Way.

Over the summer, the Tujenge Opportunity Fund was rebranded as the Brad Gasser Memorial Scholarship. Brad’s friends and family in the United States donated generously to the Scholarship, which has been a challenge for Tujenge staff to find resources for in recent years, relying almost entirely on GoFundMe campaigns to raise money for these scholars. This year, thanks to the outpouring of generosity in memory of Brad, the Scholarship will be able to support all the students who need it.

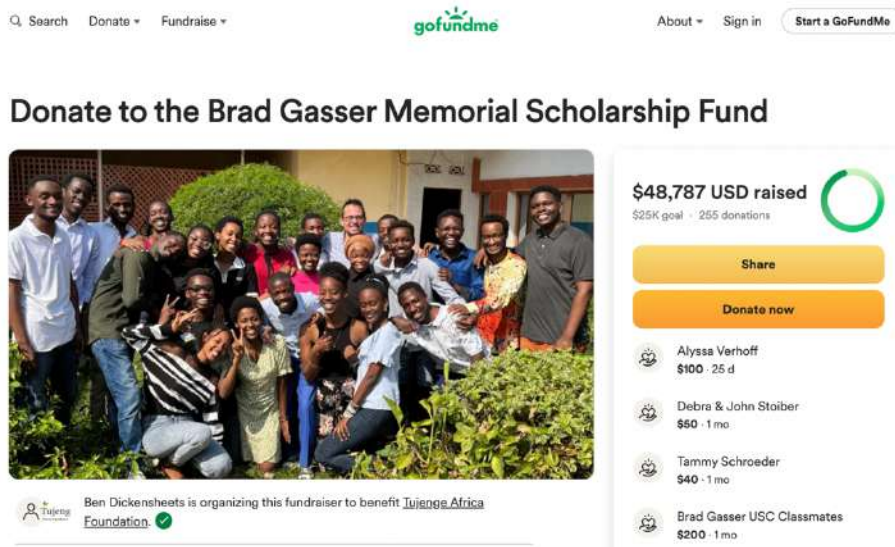
The Scholarship supports Tujenge graduates who did not receive a scholarship to go abroad – and this was very important to Brad, who understood the important role of Tujenge as facilitating access to tertiary studies in general and not as a gateway to the United States. The Brad Gasser Memorial Scholarship is a vital resource for these bright young scholars to continue their education.

The Brad Gasser Memorial Scholarship

Inaugural Program Director Ben Dickensheets volunteered to set up the new Memorial Scholarship, and wrote this in the description:

Brad started with the Tujenge Scholars Program in 2018, and quickly established himself as a beloved instructor. He developed courses which have come to define the interdisciplinary culture of the program, combining his wide-ranging expertise in science, technology, philosophy, and history. Students honed their reading and critical thinking skills under his tutelage, and over the course of their 18 months in his classes would discover completely new ways of looking at the world. Brad was a major source of advice and inspiration for the 159 students he worked with during his tenure.

Brad was also a tireless champion for his students throughout their time in the program and beyond. He recognized the need for ongoing support for alumni who pursue university studies in Burundi, and would fund-raise for the Opportunity Fund throughout his personal network. His efforts have been a major factor in the success of this scholarship program. In light of these efforts, the Foundation is renaming the Opportunity Fund program in his memory and is launching this fundraising campaign for his students who will be starting in Burundian universities over the next six months.



Q Search Donate Fundraise gofundme About Sign in Start a GoFundMe

Donate to the Brad Gasser Memorial Scholarship Fund

\$48,787 USD raised
\$25K goal · 255 donations

Share

Donate now

- Alyssa Verhoff
\$100 · 25 d
- Debra & John Stoiber
\$50 · 1 mo
- Tammy Schroeder
\$40 · 1 mo
- Brad Gasser USC Classmates
\$200 · 1 mo

Ben Dickensheets is organizing this fundraiser to benefit [Tujenge Africa Foundation](#)

Currently, the original five Opportunity Fund Scholars are highlighted on the GoFundMe page. The page will be updated to include new scholars that are to benefit from the fund starting in 2025. Justice Divine (Cohort 2), who administers the Scholarship, will be tasked with curating personal updates on the scholars which can be shared with all those who have donated to this cause.

The fund comes at a crucial time because of converging crises at Burundi's only public university, which have caused mass resignation of faculty and drastically fewer places for matriculating students. What this means for Tujenge alumni is that many more of those who stay in Burundi will have to attend the country's more expensive private universities and more students will need assistance from the fund.

As of January 2025, the fund has raised \$50,152. For donations, please note that the correct link is: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/donate-to-the-brad-gasser-memorial-scholarship>

Tujenge is profoundly grateful to all those who have honored Brad's memory by supporting these bright young Burundians.

Tujenge Staff, Interns, and Volunteers

The staff, interns, and volunteers at Tujenge keep the wheels turning. The extent to which Tujenge alumni have contributed to the smooth functioning of the program cannot be underestimated.

In 2024, Tujenge has seen many changes. Eliphase Irankunda (Cohort 5), an intern that had practically become a staff member and which the Program Manager and Director relied upon a great deal, left for the U.S. to begin his studies at Northwestern University. Juste Nsavyamahoro (Cohort 6) also ended his internship to begin his studies, at USIU-Africa in Kenya.

However, Tujenge staff have been fortunate to have the help of two other long-term interns, Chimène Mugisha (Cohort 6) and Gaella Mpundu, who have proven to be capable and competent young women that have come to the rescue many times – including during the intense early decision application season. Joining them later in the year, as the office managers I hand my keys over to for early mornings and late nights, were Cohort 7's Emmanuel Butoyi, Yalled Irakoze, and Audace Irivuzimana. The Tujenge office has been busy in 2024, with many other alumni coming to visit, volunteer, and mentor current students on a regular basis. Interns and volunteers have also been involved with Liberal Arts and Peace Studies classes, gaining some teaching experience in the process.

In early October, Tujenge welcomed Jean Clinton Harimana, a member of Bujumbura's deaf community, as Burundian Sign Language teacher. Thanks to his charisma, effective teaching methods, and great sense of humor, Cohort 8 has been relishing the opportunity to learn a new language with Clinton and gain an understanding of deaf culture in the process.

Eliel Dushime (Cohort 1), a graduate of Harvard University, began volunteering to teach Math in November and officially joined as an instructor for January 2025 while Tujenge staff review applications for a new STEM teacher. Christian Hakizimana (Cohort 1), Tujenge's IT expert, will teach Cohort 9's introductory Digital Literacy class, and Hussein Bitambuka (Cohort 3) is volunteering to teach Programming to the senior cohort during their last term in the Spring of 2025.

Program Manager Neully Nziza, who has been with Tujenge since its inception and has worked so hard to ensure logistics and day-to-day functioning, has moved on to pursue new opportunities. Tujenge is incredibly fortunate to have Jean de Dieu Ndayishimiye (Cohort 2) stepping into these enormous shoes; it is hard to imagine anyone more capable than he for the job. Jean de Dieu will also, if time allows, teach an Agile Project Management class with each cohort.

David Bett, Tujenge's long-time Lead College Counselor, is also moving on in 2025. Ashraf Munyi, a graduate of the University of Nairobi, is stepping up to take on the role. Ashraf is also teaching a Business Communications; and he has single-handedly revolutionized and revived Tujenge's social media presence.

Finally, Simpliste Ninahazimana (Cohort 1) has been with Tujenge since 2020, in charge of managing the Tujenge student house. Simpliste has managed life at the student house with safety and security at the forefront of her mind.

For 2025, there will be a slight restructuring of Tujenge's administrative and management roles. The Program Manager and Program Director will each report to the Executive Director, and each of the roles will be more deliberately oriented around logistics and financial operations in the case of the former, and academic program direction in the case of the latter.

Special Events and Guest Speakers

Talent Show

In June, Cohorts 7 and 8 collaborated on the organization of a talent show. Among the performances was a moving song performed in Burundian Sign Language, original plays, musical performances, poetry slams, and a fashion show.

About half-way through the show, the electricity went out and did not return – the rest of the performances were done *a cappella*, and the stage was lit by the cell phone flashlights of the audience.



Talent show emcees Trésor (Cohort 8) and Vivie (Cohort 7)



Musical performances by Félicien and Karen (Cohort 7)



Cohort 7 and 8 students close a play



Eric Nkurunziza (left, Cohort 7), who led the Sign Language Club performance



Jean de Dieu (Cohort 2) performs “Dancing in the Dark” after the power goes out

Special Guests

Jim LeBrecht, *Crip Camp*

In their Liberal Arts seminar, Cohort 8 students, like Cohort 7 last year, learned about the history of the disability rights movement in the United States, particularly the Section 504 sit-in of 1977, as well as the topic of disability rights in the context of Burundi.



Rosine (Cohort 7) talks with Mr. LeBrecht

On February 28, both cohorts had the unique opportunity to participate in a Zoom discussion with Mr. Jim LeBrecht – a filmmaker, sound designer, and disability rights activist. The students saw the Netflix documentary *Crip Camp*, co-directed and co-produced by Mr. LeBrecht, on February 23. The Zoom discussion was inspiring, encouraging, and a great learning experience. Many thanks to Mr. LeBrecht for sharing his time with us, and to Tujenge Board Member Mr. Matt Chanoff for introducing us to him!

Jean Marie Ngendahayo, Former Foreign Minister



On February 27, Cohort 7 benefited from a history lesson and discussion with former Burundian Foreign Minister, Jean-Marie Ngendahayo. He came as a guest lecturer in Peace Studies class at the invitation of the student-led Ubuntu Project. Cohort 7 students learned about pre-colonial and pre-independence political institutions in Burundi, including *ubushingatahe*, and the way Belgian administration undermined the Kingdom of Burundi. After class, Minister Ngendahayo stuck around to talk more with the students.

Pierre Claver Njemimana, Psychologist

Mr. Njemimana is a practicing psychologist in Bujumbura, and the father of Cohort 7's own Don Kelly Nkurunziza. He visited Cohorts 7 and 8 in May to talk about the issues of mental health and addiction based on his experience as a practitioner.



Codetrain Africa

Pamela Niyongere (Cohort 2), co-founder of TechBridge Burundi and a graduate of Ashesi University, helped Tujenge arrange a guest lecture by her colleagues from Ghana Codetrain Africa. Students learned about start-ups, entrepreneurship, and how to network.

Melchisedeck Boshirwa, Founder and CEO of Andika

In Cohort 7's Agile Project Management class, students learned about entrepreneurship and what it's like to run a multi-services company from Mr. Boshirwa of Andika Solutions. Mr. Boshirwa earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Burundi and is also Editor-in-Chief at Andika Magazine.



Arlette Irankunda, Founder and CEO of CareConnect



Cohort 7 students also had an opportunity to hear from a successful young Burundian woman, Arlette Irankunda, who went to college and graduate school in India and has a Master's degree in Physiotherapy. She is founder and CEO of her own physiotherapy practice, and she is Chair of the Board of Directors of the Nganinka Association, which helps children with disabilities. Cohort 7 students benefited greatly from her words of advice, and from meeting a role model for success in Burundi.

Zacharie Bukuru, Historian and Author

The Korerwa Project, led by Rosine Ininahazwe and Don Kelly Nkurunziza of Cohort 7, invited the author Zacharie Bukuru to share his knowledge and expertise in the students' Peace Studies class. Mr. Bukuru is the author of a book about the 1997 killing of 40 students at the Petit Séminaire de Buta, a boys' high school in Bururi province.



International Humanitarian Worker, UNRWA

In May, Cohort 7 students had a discussion with an international humanitarian worker employed at a prominent United Nations aid agency based in one of the world's most dire conflict zones. Because of the political sensitivity of the conflict context and violent attacks on the agency, the Zoom was conducted under Chatham House Rules and on the condition of anonymity. The guest was a grad school colleague of Program Director Carol Jean Gallo. Students were able to ask questions about a conflict that they had only read about, and to get the perspective of someone working on the ground in that region.

Dr. Ben Radley, *We Will Win Peace*

In June, Cohort 7 Peace Studies students studied the intractable problem of “conflict minerals” in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As part of a critique of the effects of the global activist movement against conflict minerals on the economy of eastern DRC, including the addition of Section 1502 to the United States Dodd-Frank Act, students watched the documentary *We Will Win Peace*. Students were fortunate that Ben Radley, one of the producers of the film, was willing to talk with the class about the documentary as well as the issue of the role of mineral exploitation in the context of DRC’s many conflicts. Dr. Radley is also a Professor at the University of Bristol. The discussion was very engaging, and the students learned a lot from the frank exchange.



Lyse (Cohort 7) takes the opportunity to ask Dr. Radley a question

Etienne Mashuli, Tujenge Executive Director

Etienne also visited Tujenge, at the end of March, not just to check in with staff on the ground but to lead a discussion with Cohort 7 students in the Peace Studies class about how Burundians can move past the focus on ethnic politics in the country. He also talked about his experiences attending educational institutions in other countries.



Alumni and Intern Teachers

Juste Nsavyamahoro (Cohort 6), Disability Studies

In February, Cohort 8 began a unit in the liberal arts seminar on Disability Studies. The classes were taught by intern Juste Nsavyamahoro (Cohort 6), and included discussions about the ways in which disability rights are part of the broader frameworks of human rights and civil rights.



Juste (Cohort 6) teaches a class on empathy versus pity for Disability Studies

Osian Nzoyisenga (Cohort 2), Food Science

In March, Cohorts 7 and 8 had the chance to learn about food science and technology and participate in an experiment demonstrating why different brands of bottled water may taste different. Osian, a recent graduate of Cornell University with a BS in Food Science, led two class sessions on various aspects of food chemistry, processing, packaging, and distribution. In the experiment, students tasted three unlabeled samples of water and had to guess the brand or if it was tap water. The lesson illustrated the effects of both chemistry and branding on perceived taste.



Jean Luc Ishimwe (Cohort 3), Advanced Physics

In July, just a few days before he passed away, Brad had Jean Luc Ishimwe, a senior at Swarthmore College and a Math and Physics double major, teach one of his class sessions. Brad said afterwards that he felt proud of him – “Just because it’s what I would say doesn’t necessarily mean it’s great, but... he was answering students’ questions the same way I would. I was so happy.” Jean Luc taught an advanced Physics class session in which the group derived the formula $e = mc^2$.



Deriving Einstein's $e = mc^2$

Let us imagine two systems, A and B, of equivalent mass, such that B is in motion relative to A and having velocity v . The two systems emit a pair of photons in opposite directions, and of equal intensity, such that the direction of emission is along the plane of travel for B. We can say that, because of conservation of energy and momentum, the total energy and momentum of the systems before photon emission and after is conserved. Thus, the relative motion of B is unaffected by the emission of photons:

Thus, for the system A we can write:

$$1) A_0 = A_1 + \frac{e}{2} + \frac{e}{2}$$

where the A_0 is the energy before photon emission, A_1 is the energy after photon emissions, and e is the energy of the (dual) photon emissions.

For the system B we can write:

$$2) B_0 = B_1 + \frac{e}{2} \times \frac{1-v/c}{\sqrt{1-v^2/c^2}} + \frac{e}{2} \times \frac{1+v/c}{\sqrt{1-v^2/c^2}}$$

where B_0 is the energy before photon emission, B_1 is the energy after photon emission, e is the energy of the (dual) photon emissions, and the remaining terms are from the Relativistic Doppler Effect due to the (apparent) motion of B relative to A.

Charles Minani (Cohort 4), Ophthalmology

In October, Cohort 8 got the chance to have an introductory lecture on Ophthalmology from Cohort 4's Charles Minani. He began studying for his degree in that field at Hope University in Bujumbura thanks to the Brad Gasser Memorial Scholarship.



Charles said in an interview, “Hope University is a good choice for me. I’m proud of being a student there. What was important to me was not to go abroad, but to analyze what I can do for myself and for my society. And for me, that is medical studies. ... My plan was to work hard in high school and get into the University of Burundi, because private schools are too expensive. My family could not help pay for that. Without the Tujenge Opportunity Fund [now the Brad Gasser Memorial Scholarship], or the Tujenge program, I would not get to Hope. The time I spent at Tujenge helped me to train my mind and to grow intellectually. I can see the difference between me and my classmates at Hope, who didn’t attend such a program.”

Other Alumni and Intern Teachers

Several other Tujenge alumni and interns taught class sessions this year, including:

Shalom Iteriteka (Cohort 7)	Conflict Minerals in D. R. Congo
Hussein Bitambuka (Cohort 3)	Epistemology and Philosophy of Knowledge
Rosine Ininahazwe (Cohort 7), Vivie Gahimbare (Cohort 7), and Gaella Mpundu (Intern)	The Role of Women in Peace and Conflict
Gaella Mpundu (Intern), Emmanuel Butoyi (Cohort 7), and Shalom Iteriteka (Cohort 7)	Medical Perspectives on War-Induced Trauma
Chimène Mugisha (Cohort 6) and Belle Ange Ngabirano (Cohort 7)	Representation of Women in the Media
Eric Nkurunziza (Cohort 7) and Don Destin Iriho (Cohort 7)	Animal Cognition and Intelligence

Don Divin Bizimungu (Cohort 3) also took time to talk with Cohort 8 about his college and work experiences. Don Divin is a graduate of the University of Mascareignes in Mauritius and is an Operations and Program Consultant at the United Nations Development Program.

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.

Second Annual Tujenge Alumni 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. In June 2024, Tujenge held its second alumni conference with the following guest speakers and presentations:

- Eric Hatungimana (Cohort 5) (via Zoom), Ashesi University, Ghana:
My First Steps in Developing the Tujane App
- Jean Trésor Haragakiza (Cohort 2) (via Zoom), Kwamé Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana:
Medical Diagnostics and Exploring Careers in Health Care in an African Context
- Jean Luc Ishimwe (Cohort 3), Swarthmore College, United States:
Ubuntu Mu Kwezi and Abarundikazi Period Movement: Fighting Period Poverty and Stigma in Burundi
- Christa Ishimwe (Cohort 2), PhD Student, Temple University, United States:
My Journey at Wesleyan University
- Jean Crespín Cubahiro (Cohort 2), American University of Beirut, Lebanon:
Discovering Industrial Engineering Career Paths

Cohort 7 and 8 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: <https://bit.ly/Tujenge-Mini-Conference-2024>.



Jean Crespín, Jean Luc, and Christa

Scholar Projects

Korerwa Project Trip to Buta (Cohorts 5, 6, 7 and 8)

Over the summer, Rosine Ininahazwe and Don Kelly Nkurunziza, co-founders of Cohort 7’s Korerwa Project, organized a trip to the Petit Séminaire de Buta. This is a boys’ boarding school that was the site of an infamous massacre in 1997 in which 40 boys were killed. According to Rosine, the purpose of the trip was both educational and reconciliatory: “We want to put an emphasis on education... We want young people to learn from the story of these students, because they were able to go beyond what politicians were asking them to do. They felt that fraternity and solidarity were more important than anything – even in this most difficult moment, they chose to stay together with their brothers.”

Don Kelly said, “What we want to share with young Burundians is that it is possible to live in harmony with others. Especially when we think our interests are at risk, we think it’s not possible; that we have to prioritize ourselves. But that will not help us move forward.” This part of Burundi’s history is still sensitive, and it shows remarkable strength and courage to confront it head-on. Other students that helped organize the trip were Don Destin Iriho, Aimée Darlène Izere, and Lyse Claudia Ijera of Cohort 7.



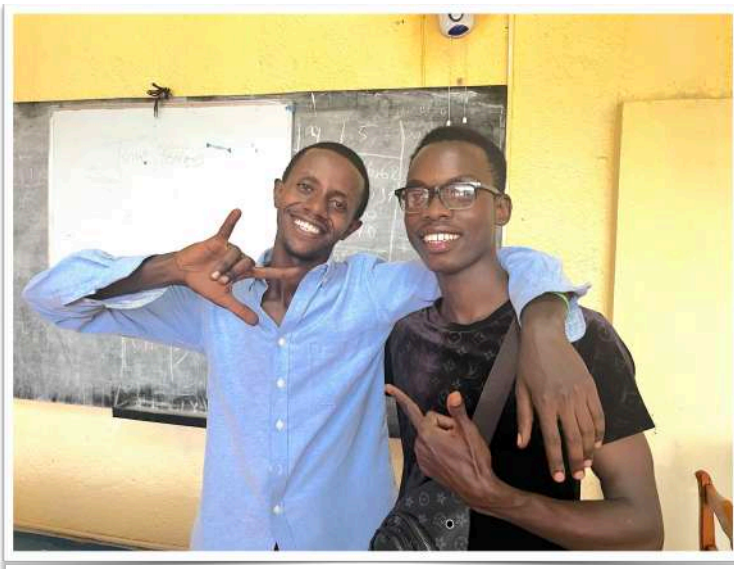
The Korerwa Project published an overview and assessment of the trip in November, which can be read at the following link: <https://bit.ly/Buta-2024>

Ubuntu Project (Cohorts 6, 7, and 8)

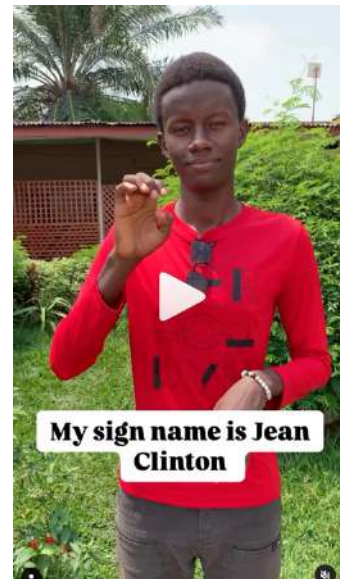
Six Cohort 7 students and one alumna from Cohort 6 were recruited in 2023 by Raoul Nyenimigabo, Verité Gahimbare, and Naomie Muhoza (Cohort 7) to embark on a research project whose aim is to explore the philosophical and practical applications of Ubuntu to the Burundian conflict context. The group has evolved into a forum for students of all ethnicities to engage in scholarly research and share resources with each other in order to discuss and analyze the country's fraught history from multiple points of view. The group continued to meet in 2024, with new members from Cohort 8.

Burundian Sign Language Club (Cohorts 6, 7, and 8)

In the summer of 2023, Juste Nsavyamahoro (Cohort 6), 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 founded Tujenge's first student club when he began teaching BSL twice a week after classes. Juste left Tujenge in April 2024 to begin his studies at USIU-Africa, but Eric Nkurunziza (Cohort 7) rose to the challenge of taking his place. After Eric left Tujenge in the Fall to begin his studies at Oberlin College, the BSL club continued to meet. The club now benefits from the presence of Tujenge's new BSL teacher, Clinton Harimana.



Juste and Eric



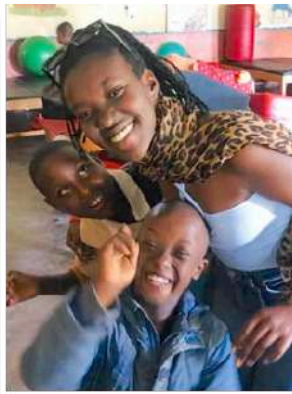
Clinton's introduction to Tujenge can be viewed on Instagram here:
<https://bit.ly/Clinton-Tujenge>

Your Disability Does Not Define Your Future (Cohorts 7 and 8)

In July 2023, Shalom Iteriteka and Lucky Gateka (Cohort 7) began a project to support the Institut Médico-Pédagogique (IMP) de Mutwenzi in Gitega. The school provides care and education for disabled children, many of whom are either orphans or without parents who can care for them. In recent years, the school lost its main sources of funding. Shalom and Lucky decided to raise money in order to help the school obtain at least some of its basic necessities, like school supplies and soap. When time allows, they visit the school – some three hours' journey from Bujumbura – to meet with the director and socialize with the children.

Cadie Naomie Muhoza, Eric Nkurunziza, Thierry Butoyi, Précieuse Ingabire, and Félicien Bukuru (Cohort 7) joined the project later. The project has continued, with the participation of Cohort 8's Tessie Mpundu and Yousra Hassan. In July, Program Director Carol Jean Gallo joined the group on a trip to Gitega to visit IMP.

After Tujenge's Zoom with Mr. LeBrecht, Shalom was inspired to start planning to make a short documentary about the school to advocate for the rights of the students there.



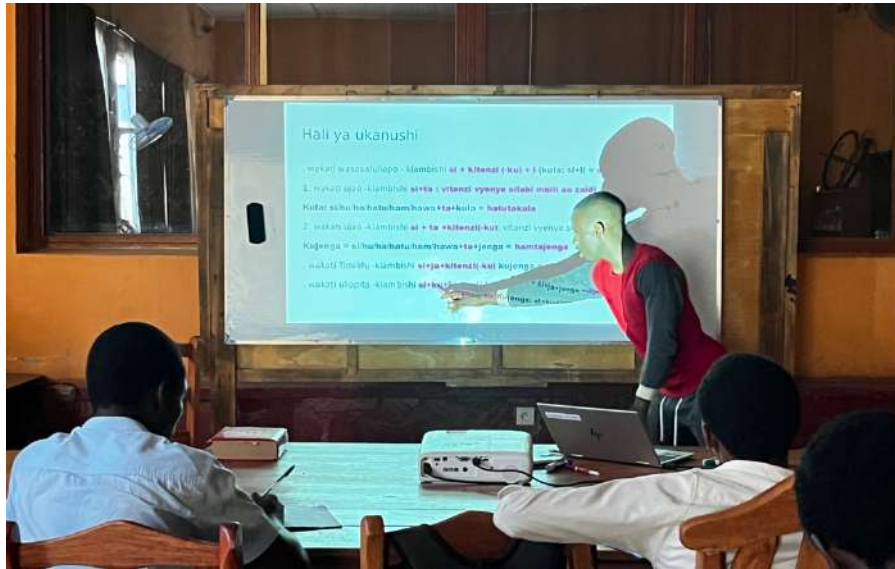
Gatumba Flood Relief Project (Cohorts 7 and 8)

In the spring of 2024, many communities around East Africa were affected by heavy flooding. Neighborhoods around Bujumbura, because of their close proximity to Lake Tanganyika, were hit particularly hard. In response, Eric Nkurunziza (Cohort 7) and Yousra Hassan (Cohort 8) visited Gatumba, one of the severely affected communities. They brought some basic supplies to the community and helped how they could.



Swahili Club (Cohorts 7 and 8)

Audace Irvuzimana (Cohort 7) has been a volunteer language teacher for over a year, providing free help and instruction for Burundians online and in person in Kirundi, Swahili, French, and English. This year, he has also been assisting in the instruction of Tujenge's Swahili Club, which was founded early in the year on the initiative of Yves Tuyizere (Cohort 8).



Music Club (Cohorts 7 and 8)

In February, Félicien Bukuru (Cohort 7), an accomplished keyboardist and guitarist, started a music club where students from both cohorts learn not just how to play instruments, but also how to study music as a subject. Félicien's goals are to provide a space where students can socialize through teamwork, and to help them reach a point of skill and confidence where they will be able to perform music on their own. His brother, Thierry Butoyi (Cohort 7), is a music producer and accomplished guitarist and teaches students along with Félicien. Michael Tuyizigire (Cohort 8), talented on multiple instruments, has taken the lead on teaching music since the graduation of Cohort 7.



Félicien instructs Star (Cohort 8) on the keyboard

Do the Right Thing Essay Contest (Cohort 8)

In 2024, Tujenge students participated in the “Do the Right Thing” essay competition, sponsored by Tujenge Board Member Matt Chanoff, for the second time. The contest was inspired by Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat who issued visas to Jewish refugees during the Holocaust even though he was forbidden by his government from doing so.

Tujenge’s winners were:

- First Prize: Yousra Hassan
- Honorable Mentions: Michael Tuyizigire, Satia Iganze, Monia Bamina

Abarundikazi Period Movement and Ubuntu Mu Kwezi (Cohorts 2 and 3)

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 and Math at Swarthmore College, and Milka recently graduated with a degree in 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 he carried out over the summer of 2024 with APM and other community-based organizations in some of the most impoverished regions of Burundi.

Tujenge students and alumni are very active and engaged in their communities, wherever they are in the world. They are also pursuing socially, scientifically, and technologically relevant research at some of the best universities in Burundi, elsewhere Africa, and around the world.

These selections of student and alumni clubs, projects, and initiatives is not exhaustive. To find more and stay up to date, visit Tujenge’s Instagram account @tujengeafrica.

Cohort 7 Graduation

The graduation ceremony for Cohort 7 on June 24, organized by Program Manager Neuilly Nziza, was a great success. The ceremony began with the procession of Cohort 7 followed by an opera performance. There were speeches by the outgoing Program Manager, the incoming Program Manager, the Program Director, the inaugural Program Director, and a Cohort 7 class representative. There were also leadership awards presented to two exceptional students from Cohort 7 and a stunning musical performance by Cohort 8's Monia Marie Bamina, accompanied by Cohort 7's Félicien Bukuru on keyboard and Cohort 8's Michael Tuyizigire on guitar. A rough cut of a slideshow from the graduation can be viewed here: <https://bit.ly/Tujenge-Grad-2024>.

In the evening, Tujenge hosted a graduation dinner for Cohort 7 and invited alumni as well. All seven cohorts were represented at the dinner.





Jean Christophe Niyongere and his father (left)
Eric Nkurunziza and his mother (right)
with their leadership awards



Selected 2024-25 Admissions and Matriculations

Christa Ishimwe (Cohort 2)	Temple University, Math PhD (United States)
Kevin Bigirimana (Cohort 5)	Ashesi University (Ghana)
Nobel Bitangimana (Cohort 5)	Ashesi University (Ghana)
Yango Baricako (Cohort 5)	University of the People (United States; online)
Piaguette Muhimpundu (Cohort 5)	Hope University (Burundi)
Eliphase Irankunda (Cohort 5)	Northwestern University (United States)
Juste Nsavyamahoro (Cohort 6)	United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Deborah Ndawayesu (Cohort 6)	United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Raoul Jonathan Nyenimigabo (Cohort 7)	Yale University (United States)
Aimée Darlène Izere (Cohort 7)	Northwestern University (United States)
Marc Arsène Iradukunda (Cohort 7)	Wesleyan University (United States)
Don Destin Iriho (Cohort 7)	Brown University (United States)
Eric Nkurunziza (Cohort 7)	Oberlin College (United States)
Lyse Claudia Irera (Cohort 7)	Ashesi University (Ghana)
Alain Magayane (Cohort 7)	United States International University-Africa (Kenya)
Karen Tuyizigire (Cohort 7)	Bowdoin College (United States)
Cadie Naomie Muhoza (Cohort 7)	Kyungdong University (South Korea)
Don Kelly Nkurunziza (Cohort 7)	Kyungdong University (South Korea)
Jovith Ntiranyibagira (Cohort 7)	Kyungdong University (South Korea)
Jean Christophe Niyongere (Cohort 7)	University of Burundi (Gitega Campus)
Shalom Iteriteka (Cohort 7)	Oberlin College (United States)
Satia Iganze (Cohort 8)	Carleton College (United States)
Clerry Arakaza (Cohort 8)	Northwestern University (United States)



Kevin (Cohort 5) and Hollande (Cohort 6)

Selected University Graduations 2024

Zélie Karondo (Cohort 2)	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Brown University (USA)
Jean Crespin Cubahiro (Cohort 2)	Industrial Engineering, American University of Beirut (Lebanon)
Gass Iyacu (Cohort 2)	Manufacturing and Design Engineering, Northwestern (USA)
Yvan Junior Irambona (Cohort 2)	Finance; minor in Data Analytics, Al Akhawayn University (Morocco)
Christa Bénitha Ingabire (Cohort 3)	Math; minor in Studio Art, Hamilton College (USA)
Olivier Nifasha (Cohort 3)	International Business and Trade (Hons.), African Leadership University (Rwanda)
Yvette Uwimana (Cohort 3)	International Business and Trade (Hons.), African Leadership University (Rwanda)
Breille Irahoza (Cohort 3)	Environmental Studies, Vassar College (USA)
Milka Brenda Ininahazwe (Cohort 3)	Mechanical Engineering, Lafayette College (USA)
Snella Kimana (Cohort 3)	Finance; minor in Math, Al Akhawayn University (Morocco)
Godiolla Akimana (Cohort 3)	Environmental Health, American University of Beirut (Lebanon)
Isaac Idubu Ndiokubwayo (Cohort 3)	Environmental Health, American University of Beirut (Lebanon)
Jean Luc Ishimwe (Cohort 3)	Math and Physics double major, Swarthmore College (USA)
Rebecca Irakiza (Cohort 3)	Neuroscience and Human Rights Studies, Trinity College (USA)
Vumilia Hicakibuko (Cohort 3)	Business Management, Africa Leadership College (Mauritius)
Annie Stardess Karitonze (Cohort 3)	Math and Computer Science double major, Smith College (USA)
Noé Vyizigiro (Cohort 3)	Economics, Middlebury College (USA)
Nys Marlaine Shima Iyacu (Cohort 3)	Biomedical Engineering, City University of Hong Kong (China)
Ornella Dusenge (Cohort 3)	Environmental Science, Kwamé Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana)
Richard Mugisha (Cohort 3)	Computer Engineering, Academic City University (Ghana)
Thaddée Nkundimana (Cohort 3)	Medical Laboratory Sciences (Hons.), Africa University (Zimbabwe)

From the Academic 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.

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 or awaiting admission. 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 five of Tujenge’s Twa graduates have matriculated to university, two of whom 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, I 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.

Tujenge interns from Cohort 5 assisted in jump-starting this research. A student from Cohort 2 has been assisting remotely, as a major part of his undergraduate studies was on the mixed methods evaluation of educational programs. Finally, my father, who teaches a course on mixed methods research at Johns Hopkins University, has been volunteering to give feedback on the research approach.

For several reasons, including time and resource constraints, little progress was made on this study in 2024. It is my hope that I will have the capacity to revive this study in 2025.

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

Vision for 2025 and Upcoming Changes

2025 holds many promises for Tujenge. Sixty interviews for Cohort 9 were conducted in December. From the interviews, 20 candidates were selected to join the Scholars Program. There were about 160 applications all together.

Increased Alumni Engagement and Updates

Early in 2023, I began building a WhatsApp group called the Tujenge Alumni Network. By the end of 2023, 95 alumni had joined the group. Alumni membership in the group is now approximately 130, not counting Tujenge staff that are in the group.

As WhatsApp is so ubiquitously used on the Continent and among international students abroad, the aim was to have at least all students who have completed the Tujenge program join the group. It is a place for Tujenge alumni to share news and opportunities with each other, as well as a place for myself to stay in touch with alumni and organize events such as conferences or alumni presentations. The group was frequently active – at least on a weekly basis – throughout 2024. It has therefore been successfully serving its purpose. Toward the end of the year, I began creating more groups for specialized interests among alumni – such as STEM, Music, and Human Rights – as well as regional groups – for alumni with shared interests to discuss those topics in greater depth and to network with each other.

In 2024, incoming College Counselor Ashraf Munyi accelerated alumni engagement through social media, in particular on Instagram. With an undergraduate degree in Development Communication, his social media skills, proficiency in CapCut, and enthusiasm for generating content has meant more alumni engagement via this platform.

In 2025, I aim to tackle the ongoing challenge of fully updating the entire alumni database of all cohorts, including the sector and country in which college graduates are working.

Student/Alumni Initiatives

As Program Director, I have been impressed with the longevity of student initiatives – which have continued and in some cases thrived despite the graduation and departure of their founding members. Among those that have been successfully passed down from cohort to cohort are the Ubuntu project, the Sign Language Club, the Music Club, Your Disability Does Not Define Your Future, and the Korerwa project (described above). In 2025, I expect that student-led projects and clubs initiated by Cohort 8 will also pass the torch to Cohort 9. This includes the Arabic Club and Swahili Club. I also expect that the field trip to Buta may become an annual tradition, if the senior cohort each year has organizers as motivated as those from Cohort 7 that planned and executed the entire trip on their own. New ideas are also emerging, as Carlène Bukuru of Cohort 8 has proposed an English Writing Club where students with advanced writing skills workshop with students who need help improving.

The student projects and clubs, which emerged for the first time with the Sign Language Club in 2023, build camaraderie among the students and bring a great scholastic energy to the atmosphere of the compound after school. The projects and clubs are entirely student-led and give the students ideal opportunities for taking on leadership roles.

Tujenge Alumni Conference

The “mini-conference” held in June 2023 was a great success, and I had hoped 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. In 2024, because of time and resource constraints, the conference resembled the “mini-conference” held in 2023. This nascent Tujenge Alumni Conference, however, has been a great success and the current cohorts of students gain much from learning from their elders. The third annual Alumni Conference is slated for June 2025, before the graduation of Cohort 8.

Burundian Sign Language and Disability Studies

The academic program of 2025 will build on the new learning experiences introduced in 2024 – in particular the unit on Disability Studies and the introduction of Burundian Sign Language as a core course. The unit on Disability Studies is an ideal introduction to several key thematic areas of the Program in general, such as critical thinking and radical empathy. While challenging for students in terms of getting them to question their own assumptions and biases, it is also a relatively uncontroversial topic with which to begin encouraging students to see the humanity in everyone without generalizing or essentializing. This will prepare them for more contentious topics in the Burundian context, such as LGBTQ+ Studies and the unit on Burundi’s civil wars in Peace Studies.

In learning Burundian Sign Language and building relationships with members of Bujumbura’s deaf community, students have developed a newfound sense of empathy and understanding of people very different from themselves. They not only learn how to communicate, they also learn about deaf culture and they experience a change in their thought process as they learn a new language. In 2025, Disability Studies and Burundian Sign Language will continue to be core aspects of the academic program.

A financial overview for 2024 can be obtained as a separate report from Tujenge’s financial management staff.

Thank you for making Tujenge’s work possible!