

# Annual Report 2025

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## To the Board of Directors

It has been an eventful year for the Tujenge Scholars. Nelson Kagimbi (Cohort 2) has stepped in to teach Math and to manage Tujenge's IT department. Cohorts 8 and 9 benefitted from having special guests for class discussions, and all have shown tremendous growth in terms of academic aptitude, leadership, and English proficiency. Students and alumni 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 the third annual alumni conference in June – this year, for the first time, held via Zoom so that Board members and Tujenge Scholars around the world could attend. In August, the Gasser family in Ohio hosted a fundraiser for the Brad Gasser Memorial Scholarship, allowing Tujenge to support more university-bound students in Burundi than ever. Finally, Tujenge alumni interns and volunteers have done an admirable job of teaching many of the topics formerly covered by Brad (and more). Tujenge would not be able to thrive without this impassioned support from alumni and their desire to give back.

Tujenge thanks the Board for their continued generous support.

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## Orientation Week

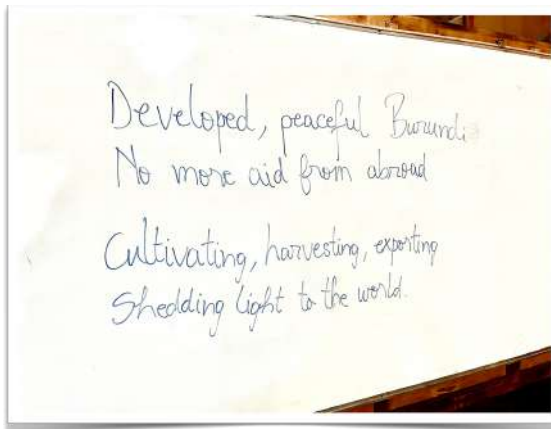
January saw an action-packed orientation for Cohort 9. Several alumni were also in attendance, as was Cohort 8, who was in their last Tujenge term. Tujenge cohorts begin in January and graduate in June of the following year, so there is a six-month overlap among the cohorts in which the culture of Tujenge is passed from one cohort to the next. This year, orientation week continued the time-honored Tujenge traditions, such as “spaghetti towers” and an egg drop competition...



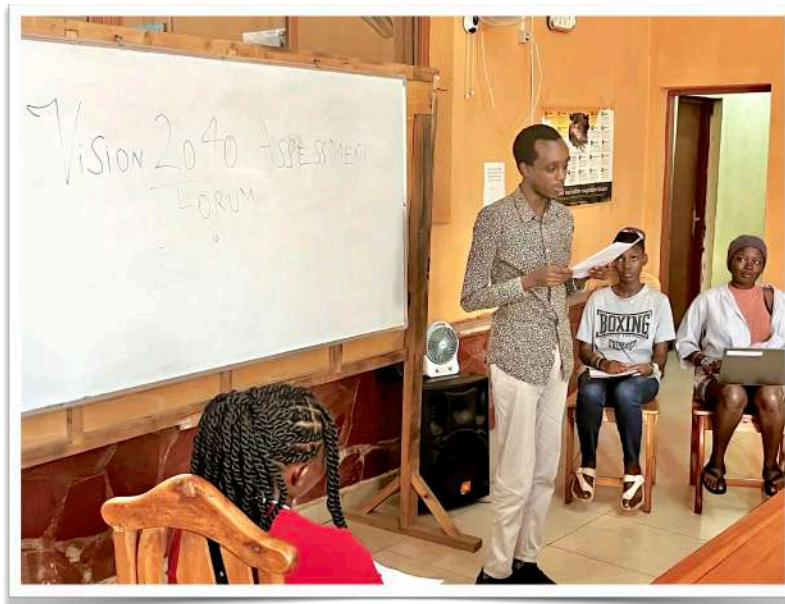
... and the creative exercise in which students imagine – “What does Burundi look like 15 years from now?”



For the latter, Etoile (Cohort 8, above) introduced a skit about a job interview in which the employer refused to be bribed. There were original songs written by students and a performance of an imagined future news broadcast in which the Minister of Education announced that all Burundian students will learn Sign Language so that Deaf Burundians can participate fully in education and job opportunities. There were also a handful of skits, including a “Vision 2040” assessment, in which students played the roles of government ministers, announcing the improvements in governance Burundi aims to achieve – from the Minister of Justice promising to fund legal aid clinics around the country, to the Minister of Tourism explaining plans to encourage tourism to help the economy, to the President announcing Burundi’s first liberal arts style university and first high school for the arts.



Lyrics from an original song composed by Tujenge students, in response to the prompt “What does Burundi look like 15 years from now?”



Vision 2040 Assessment

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## Cohort 9 Fun Facts

Cohort 9 is the current cohort began the Scholars Program in January 2025 and will graduate in June 2026.

	<p><b>Ami-Eloge Habineza</b> was born in Kayanza and went to school in Gitega. He studied Languages in high school and is interested in journalism and communications. In particular, he is interested in how media shapes people's views and how journalism can be a tool to challenge dominant narratives about marginalized groups in Burundi. At Tujenge, Ami-Eloge has learned to see things from different angles, to respect others' opinions, and to study independently.</p> <p><b>Fun Fact:</b> Ami-Eloge loves having discussions with people about all sorts of complex topics and issues.</p>
	<p><b>Marie Aubaine Mbabazi</b> was born in Gitega province and studied Mathematics &amp; Statistics in high school. At Tujenge, she has been improving her communication skills, and in addition to knowing Kirundi, French, and English, she has enjoyed learning Burundian Sign Language - she has gained a high level of proficiency in the latter. Her main interests are reading, science, and the environment.</p> <p><b>Fun Fact:</b> Aubaine loves board games, books for children, and the arts.</p>
	<p><b>Belyse Niyomwungere</b> is from Bujumbura and studied Biochemistry at Lycée Sainte Famille de Kinama. She is interested in business and computer science, and hopes to one day own her own business. At Tujenge, one of the things she has enjoyed learning about is critical thinking. Belyse knows four languages: English, Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda, and French. At Tujenge, she has also been learning Burundian Sign Language.</p> <p><b>Fun Fact:</b> Belyse is interested in learning how to breed earthworms.</p>
	<p><b>Don Bertille Uwingabire</b> is from Rumonge and studied Biochemistry and Earth Science in high school. She is interested in studying business management or entrepreneurship at university. At Tujenge, some of the subjects that have interested her the most are communications, disability studies, sexual assault, and design thinking. Her hometown Mugara is never far from her mind, and she is always thinking of ways to give back to her community. Bertille knows seven languages.</p> <p><b>Fun Fact:</b> Bertille founded a project in her hometown called Young Entrepreneurs Mugara Changemakers (YEMC), in which young people gather to learn leadership skills and facilitate the creation of microenterprises for unemployed youth.</p>



**Célia Ishimwe** is from Bujumbura and was in the Biochemistry track in high school. At Tujenge, she enjoyed the discussion sessions in English class, particularly the way they made her question her own assumptions about what is “normal”; and to see that just because “that’s how it’s always been” doesn’t mean that’s how it should be – and that everything can be questioned. Celia volunteered regularly while at Tujenge, and she knows four languages. She writes slam poetry and likes to draw. In October, Celia was offered a scholarship to study Biomedical Engineering at Gebze Teknik University in Turkey.

**Fun Fact:** What keeps Celia awake at night are her dreams of one day seeing a real, functioning Burundian healthcare system.



**Tony Emerson Ndabisabimana** is from Makamba and studied Biochemistry in high school. At university, he hopes to study a field related to healthcare or environmental sciences because he aspires to be a person who can heal, support, and lead in times of need. He speaks four languages.

Emerson has learned a lot this year – especially about critical thinking, leadership, and communication. He likes the liberal arts approach of Tujenge because it exposes him to subjects he did not learn in high school. Before Tujenge, Emerson believed many things based on confirmation bias or his own assumptions – but now he sees that he still has much to learn, which strengthens his curiosity.

**Fun Fact:** For fun, Emerson likes to referee soccer games.



**Etienne Nininahazwe** is from Ruyigi and studied in the Biology, Chemistry, & Earth Sciences track in high school. He is not yet sure what he wants to study at university, but at Tujenge he has learned a lot from the Communications class. He is curious about how people communicate in different cultures. Etienne has also enjoyed the camaraderie of the hikes students have organized, such as the one held in honor of Brad Gasser’s Birthday in June.

**Fun Fact:** Something that keeps Etienne up at night is thinking about how computers work and whether it’s possible for them to function like the brain of a person.



**John Baptiste Igiraneza** is from Gitega, where he studied in the Math-Statistics track. In high school, he was a member of the general knowledge competition club *Genies en Herbes* (analogous to Quiz Bowl in the U.S.), where he learned many facts about different parts of the world. At Tujenge, he began to develop more curiosity about the context of those facts and how they affect people. John knows four languages, and is proficient in Burundian Sign Language.

**Fun Fact:** John dreams of being a successful businessman.



**Eunice Joyce Bayubahe** is from Bujumbura, and studied in the Biology, Chemistry, & Earth Sciences track in high school. At Tujenge, Joyce was exposed to many new topics she did not study in high school – and she particularly enjoyed the Communications and Liberal Arts classes. In September, she was awarded a scholarship to study Engineering at the National School for Applied Sciences in Morocco.

**Fun fact:** Joyce has an artistic mind and loves art, fashion, interior design, and architecture. She can spend hours looking for new creations and creating designs of her own.



**Laura Nduwimana** is from Bujumbura and studied in the Biology, Chemistry, & Earth Sciences track. She is considering majoring in Biology or Food Science at university, and she also has an interest in international business and trade. Laura believes that Burundi is rich in food resources but does not possess the transformative industries that would enable them to benefit the development of the country. At Tujenge, she has enjoyed learning about topics she was not exposed to in high school, such as marginalized communities and minorities in Burundi and around the world.

**Fun Fact:** Laura is naturally curious – just ask her mother. As a small child, she once wandered into the countryside and explored new places until a Twa community found her and brought her home.



**Gylaine Haringabire** is from Bujumbura and studied in the Languages track in high school. She knows four languages – Kirundi, Swahili, French, and English – and at Tujenge she has enjoyed learning Burundian Sign Language as well. Gylaine has developed an interest in subjects related to law and conflict management, as challenges related to these areas have affected her family and community. At Tujenge, she has appreciated learning how to think critically and listen without judgment; as well as how to express herself in writing. She loves being a student and is curious about many subjects; and she loves music and traditional dance.

**Fun fact:** Gylaine enjoys being involved in youth leadership activities and attends YoungLife Nyabagere meetings every Tuesday.



**Laura Louange Imigisha** is from Ngozi province, and studied Languages in high school. She can speak six languages; she is learning Arabic and Mandarin; and she is highly proficient in Burundian Sign Language. She is thinking of studying Neuroscience or Psychology at university.

At Tujenge, her favorite classes are Liberal Arts and Burundian Sign Language. This year at Tujenge, Louange has learned a lot about herself; especially that she can be more than what she thought before.

**Fun Fact:** For fun, Louange loves to sing and dance.



**Maurice Mbarushimana** is from Karusi province and studied Math-Statistics in high school. He wants to pursue Data Science and apply it to the healthcare sector in Burundi. His dream is to pursue a career at the World Bank or WHO. In November, Maurice was awarded a scholarship to study Data Science at Ufa University of Science and Technology in Russia.

What Maurice likes about Tujenge is its sense of family and the chance to befriend students from a variety of backgrounds. He has learned a lot this year and his favorite classes have been Digital Literacy, Communications, and Peace Studies.

**Fun fact:** What keeps Maurice up at night is thinking about where he can improve himself and where he sees himself in 5 or 10 years, hopefully helping people across the world.



**Othniel Iteriteka** is from Muyinga and studied in the Biology, Chemistry, & Earth Sciences track in high school. At university, he'd like to study Public Health, Biology, or a related field. This year at Tujenge, Othniel learned about effective communication and how to recognize and challenge his own biases. He is curious about many things and likes to question everything. He spends a lot of time thinking about the kind of impact he can make in his community. He sings and plays guitar; and he likes to look for small achievements to celebrate.

**Fun Fact:** Othniel is a talented chef - when he cooks for others, they always tell him that it was appetizing.



**Destine Paradis Dushime** is from Makamba and studied in the Math-Statistics track in high school. Since starting at Tujenge, she has been interested in studying Data Science at university. This year, Paradis has enjoyed learning about critical thinking because it has helped her to question everything and to challenge her own beliefs. In addition to Math, she enjoys thinking about humanity - who we are as human beings, why we behave the way we do, why we do bad things, and how we define what is wrong and right. She likes to help people because she enjoys seeing others happy and reaching their dreams. At the end of the day, she wants to leave the world a little bit better than how she found it.

**Fun Fact:** Paradis would like to travel to outer space.



**Jérémie Niyongabo** is from Rutana and studied in the Languages track. He is interested in Computer Science and Business. At Tujenge, learning Communications has built his confidence in public speaking. He believes that education and communication are the key to breaking down barriers and developing the country. Jérémie also cares about homeless children and hopes to one day engage in a project that will be able to provide shelter and education for such children in Burundi.

**Fun Fact:** Jérémie is fluent or proficient in seven languages - Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, French, English, Spanish, and Burundian Sign Language.



**Sarah Akitugabiye** is from Bujumbura and studied in the Math-Physics-Technology track in high school. She is not sure what she wants to major in, but she is interested in STEM fields such as Physics, Computer Science, Astronomy, and Engineering. She also has many interests in the Social Sciences. At Tujenge, she began to explore topics that she did not study in high school, and several of these have changed the way she sees the world. One of the most interesting things she has learned this year is that it's okay to question your own beliefs and accept that you could be wrong. She thinks a lot about the future, her own as well as Burundi's, and hopes to one day be able to make a difference for the better.

**Fun Fact:** Sarah enjoys writing and performing slam poetry.



**Franck Ndayishimiye** is from Mwaro province and studied in the Math-Physics-Technology track in high school. He is interested in cybersecurity, and he likes to play basketball. At Tujenge, Franck liked how the Scholars Program provided a free space where students have a voice. In September, Franck was awarded a scholarship to study at Université de Limoges in France.

**Fun Fact:** What keeps Franck up at night, even when not looking at his laptop, is thinking about a code that refused to run - and then being struck with a new solution to try.

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# Brad Gasser Memorial Scholarship

On July 24, 2024, the Tujenge family lost their beloved STEM teacher, mentor, friend, and brother suddenly and unexpectedly. Brad had a profound understanding of Tujenge’s mission and contributed a great deal to shaping it.

That 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 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 rather than a gateway out of Burundi. The Brad Gasser Memorial Scholarship is a vital resource for these bright young scholars to continue their education. The current GoFundMe campaign can be found here:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-the-brad-gasser-memorial-scholarship>

This August, the Gasser family in Ohio held a golf tournament fundraiser (and sold lemonade and cookies!) to support this cause that mattered so much to Brad.



The event was organized by two of Brad’s cousins (above left). There were 30 golf teams, and over 40 raffles and auctions. The lemonade stand was run by Brad’s nieces and raised over \$300!

Tujenge is profoundly grateful to all those who have honored Brad’s memory by supporting Tujenge Scholars in Burundi.

A promotional video the Program Director made for the event and introducing the Brad Gasser Scholars of 2024-25 can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRz05f4beLo>

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In June, Tujenge Scholars celebrated Brad's birthday. Classes were canceled, and in the morning Scholars from Cohorts 7, 8, and 9 hiked up one of Gihosha's hills in Brad's honor.



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In the afternoon, the hikers were joined by Tujenge staff and more alumni at the Tujenge compound for a birthday celebration. Scholars shared their favorite memories of Brad, and even did some very funny impressions of him! For the rest of the afternoon after that, Scholars played board games, or played music, and it was a meaningful time for the Tujenge family to be together.



Above: Rosine (Cohort 7) lights the cakes  
Below: Kevin (Cohort 5) shares a memory



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# Tujenge Staff, Interns, and Volunteers

In 2025, Tujenge benefited from the tireless work and meticulous efforts of Tessie, Michael, Clerry, Gaël, Trésor, Becky, and Etoile from Cohort 8 and Shalom from Cohort 7. They have helped with everything from administrative tasks and transcript translations to cataloging applications for Cohort 10 and guiding shortlisted Cohort 10 candidates when they arrived in Bujumbura for interviews – and so much more. Tujenge staff would have been lost without them.

BGMS Scholars Audace, Emmanuel, and Yalled volunteered their services overseeing the opening and closing of the office space in the mornings and evenings, on either end of their day of university studies. This has been immensely helpful to the Program Director and Manager, as it gives them extra flexibility; especially during busy times of the year or when the Director and/or Manager is traveling.

As Tujenge has not yet found a suitable STEM teacher, Tujenge alumni have also done an admirable job filling the gaps:

- Satia and Michael (Cohort 8) have been assisting the current Math instructor
- Yousra and Michael (Cohort 8) taught a course on Human Origins and Evolution
- Destin, Karen, and Eric (Cohort 7) are teaching a course on Philosophy and Religious Studies
- Shalom (Cohort 7) has been teaching Biology and Chemistry
- Hussein (Cohort 3) taught the 5-month course on Programming for Cohort 8's final Tujenge term

In addition, Carlène (Cohort 8) led an English writing workshop for most of 2025; and Kerby (Cohort 8) assisted the English instructor and Sign Language instructor by co-teaching classes and covering classes when the instructors were traveling.

These 19 alumni worked and taught on a volunteer basis – not for personal gain, but to give back to the Tujenge community.

Acknowledgement also goes to Nelson Kagimbi (Cohort 2), who stepped in to take on the role of Math instructor when Eliel (Cohort 1) departed, and stepped in again to add IT Manager to his Tujenge responsibilities when Christian (Cohort 1) left Tujenge to attend a year-long training opportunity in Germany. An enormous thanks go to Christian for a multitude of ways he has kept Tujenge afloat in terms of IT, including helping the organization make the switch to Starlink; the latter in particular has made an enormous difference in the ability of Tujenge staff and students to work effectively.

Tujenge also thanks Agile Project Management instructor and Tujenge Program Manager Jean de Dieu Ndayishimiye (Cohort 2); Lead English instructor Dominic Nformi; Communications instructor and College Counselor Ashraf Munyi; Sign Language instructor Clinton Harimana; BGMS administrator Justice Ngendakumana (Cohort 2); and Tujenge House Manager Simpliste Ninahazimana (Cohort 1).

The Program Director thanks the team of volunteers that helped with personal essay feedback over the summer. These included Tujenge alumni in the United States and in Burundi, graduate school friends of Brad Gasser, and Brad's mother Janice. The students' essays were in great shape by the time they came to the Program Director for feedback, and this alleviated a lot of pressure on both students and staff. The time, energy, and enthusiasm these volunteers dedicated to this is emblematic of Brad's devotion to his students and to the spirit of helping others that Tujenge espouses.

Finally, thanks go to the support staff that keeps Tujenge running – Simon, Francine, Bosco, Adrien, Vital, Emery, Fulgence, and Thierry.

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# Special Events and Guest Speakers

## Talent Show

In June, Cohorts 8 and 9 collaborated on the organization of a talent show. There were musical acts, dances, spoken word, slam poetry, plays, comedy sketches, a Sign Language performance, and more. Family, friends, and alumni from several cohorts were present, as were several members of Bujumbura’s Deaf community; Clerry (Cohort 8) volunteered to translate the entire show in Sign Language for the latter. The talent show was emceed by Ami-Eloge (Cohort 9) and Yousra (Cohort 8). The students offset the cost of the show by selling drinks and snacks to the audience. The theme of the show was “A World of Dreams.”



*MCs Yousra and Ami-Eloge*

*Franck and Aubaine do the salsa*



*Carlène belts out a tune*



*Right: Clinton does an impression of Carol, as part of a comedy skit impersonating Tujenge teachers*

*Left: Etoile does a Burundian dance*

*Below: Laura, Carlène, and Aubaine serenade the audience*



*Below: Students perform an original play in which traditional Burundian gender roles are reversed*



*Yusra does a belly dance*

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## Special Guests

### Jim LeBrecht, *Crip Camp*

In June, Mr. Jim LeBrecht was kind enough to join Tujenge for another Zoom, the first having taken place in February 2024. Mr. LeBrecht is the co-producer of the Netflix documentary *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution*. Cohorts 8 and 9, as well as several alumni and Tujenge’s Sign Language instructor, had the chance to discuss the film – as well as disability rights more generally – with Mr. LeBrecht. Some students shared stories about their own community service projects working with Burundians with disabilities, and Michael (Cohort 8) even asked Mr. LeBrecht “perhaps the best question I’ve ever been asked.”

Michael’s question was: “People with disabilities were able in that time to fight and have their rights respected. But there are other forms of discrimination based on different characteristics. Do you think there will ever be a time when human rights are respected and when all are equal, or there will always be fights for justice and freedom?”

Everyone learned a lot from the discussion, and we hope to do it again next year with Cohort 10!



Yousra (Cohort 8) talks with Mr. LeBrecht

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## **Sheldon Fernandez, Author and CEO of Darwin AI**

In June, Sheldon Fernandez gave an “Introduction to Artificial Intelligence” lecture to current students. The talk was insightful, eye-opening, and even touching at times. Among other things, Mr. Fernandez played a jarringly realistic podcast hosted by AI-generated voices, in which they discussed the fact that they were not real. The lecture no doubt sparked the interest of many students interested in computer science and artificial intelligence.

## **Alex Gladstein, CSO at the Human Rights Foundation**

In July, Mr. Gladstein guest lectured Tujenge Scholars on the topic of Bitcoin and financial freedom in Africa. The talk centered on how the International Financial Institutions, particularly the IMF, and governments and central banks in Africa control economies and currencies such that populations remain vulnerable to these institutions’ policies. Therefore, the independence afforded by cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin point to a human rights issue when it comes to growth and finance. In December, thanks to the generosity of Mr. Gladstein and the Human Rights Foundation, four Tujenge Scholars will travel with the College Counselor to Mauritius for the 2025 Africa Bitcoin Conference in Port Louis. The rest of Tujenge eagerly awaits their return to hear what they learn!

## **Jael Ikinya, Human Rights Scholar**

Although she guest lectured at the end of 2024, she is not to be overlooked. Jael Ikinya, a graduate student in International Relations with a concentration in Foreign Policy and Diplomacy at USIU-Africa, led an informative and engaging discussion with Cohort 8 in December 2024. Students had the opportunity to ask questions and learn from her experience as a researcher and advocate for women’s and children’s rights.

## **Enoch Tumwine, Founder of African Rebirth**

Mr. Tumwine is a graduate student in Diplomatic Studies at Oxford University and an internationally recognized advocate for peacebuilding, youth leadership, and human rights. He joined Cohorts 8 and 9 to discuss his experience as the founder and president of African Rebirth, an NGO based in Bujumbura, and to give students the opportunity to ask questions about how they too can make a difference in their own communities.

## **Viviane Iyizire, Clinical Psychologist**

In April, at the invitation of the student-led and student-organized Girls Out Project, Tujenge hosted Viviane Iyizire, a clinical psychologist with five years of experience in psychosocial support for survivors of violence. The Girls Out project, founded by a small group of Cohort 8 students, aims to improve the physical and mental health of young Burundian girls through sports and community discussions.

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Viviane shared insights on gender-based violence and its causes, including harmful customs like *kududu*; societal beliefs; and factors such as alcoholism and war, where violence is weaponized. She also emphasized the importance of supporting survivors to prevent severe mental health issues like depression. Viviane offered practical advice on raising awareness, providing psychological and legal support, and encouraging open conversations. Scholars learned about the roles they can play as young leaders in breaking cycles of abuse and harm.

## Richard Hurowitz, the Octavian Report

In August, Mr. Hurowitz gave a guest lecture on war crimes, altruism, and genocide prevention. These topics are highly relevant in Burundi, which saw decades of civil war and genocide after independence, and which still grapples with ethnic tension. Mr. Hurowitz, with his expertise in, among other things, the Holocaust and World War II, provoked the inquisitiveness of the students as he discussed cases in which ordinary people saved lives even at the risk of losing their own. The discussion was a fascinating look into why some people take that risk; and how the goodness in humans might be harnessed to prevent future genocides. The students learned a lot, and the lecture fit very neatly with Tujenge's Peace Studies class, which was about to embark on a unit on World War II and the Holocaust.

## Ben Dickensheets, Cornell, Physics

Over the summer, inaugural Tujenge Program Director and his friend Katherine (see below) visited Bujumbura. While here, Ben taught a few Physics classes complete with hands-on demonstrations. The students had a brief introduction to the formulas and physics necessary to understand the demonstrations, and then were amazed to see and feel them put into action. They watched the light from a laser bend with flowing water, and laughed as they turned in a swivel chair by rotating a bicycle wheel spinning on an axis.



## Katherine Lindquist, Cornell, Anthropology

Dr. Lindquist gave a two-session crash course in Anthropology where students were introduced to the discipline and its main branches. They were given a short assignment to practice ethnographic observation, and then the next day shared their observations. The classes gave students fresh perspectives on some of the general approaches to scholarship at Tujenge, including perspective-taking and questioning assumptions.

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## Karen Niyonizeye, Urban Designer and Architect

In April, Karen Niyonizeye came to talk with Tujenge Scholars about networking, academics, community service, and navigating life at university. She is the Head of the Architecture Department and a Lecturer at Olivia University in Bujumbura where she leads curriculum development on healthy and sustainable cities. Her experience includes working with UN Habitat, contributing to urban health policies, [#COP28](#) submissions, and leading the Rapid Planning Studio (HEAL) Initiative. She also champions youth inclusion, having spearheaded Unleash Hack Burundi 2024, empowering young innovators.

With a Master's in Urban Design for Healthy Cities from Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, Spain, and a Bachelor's in Architecture from Ningbo University, China, Karen had valuable advice for the Cohort 8 Scholars about to graduate from the Program.



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## Scholar Guest Lecturers

In 2025, Cohort 9 students in particular were able to see the ways in which the Scholars Program has prepared their predecessors with presenting skills and the confidence to lead class discussions on the issues and topics that interest them. Alumni guest lecturers set positive examples for current Scholars to follow, demonstrating pedagogical techniques and showing that one does not need a PhD in a particular topic in order to lead an informed, intellectually stimulating lesson in the classroom. A succinct overview of Scholar Guests is provided below:

### **Tessie Mpundu (Cohort 8)**

Tessie guest lectured twice in 2025, after graduating from the Scholars Program. She led one Peace Studies class on gender-based violence in Burundi, and she also led the class unit on empathy vs. pity for the Disability Studies unit of the Liberal Arts seminar.

The latter topic is a memorable one for Tujenge students, and has generated some of the Liberal Arts seminar's most interesting discussions. Scholars are led to interrogate many of their most deeply held assumptions about disability, and through that process are able to learn the crucial intellectual and academic skill of perspective-taking.



### **Shalom Iteriteka (Cohort 7) and Trésor Karikera (Cohort 8)**

While Carol was traveling in the Spring, visiting university admissions offices in the United States, Shalom and Trésor volunteered to help by covering Peace Studies units. Shalom taught a Peace Studies class on conflict and peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Trésor taught several classes on World War II and the Holocaust, as well as the period known as The Troubles in Ireland.

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## **Jean Christophe Niyongere (Cohort 7)**

A student in Agronomy at the University of Burundi in Gitega, Jean Christophe guest lectured about the benefits and challenges of studying in the University of Burundi system. Students had the opportunity to ask questions about and learn from first-hand experiences of how to make the most of studying at one of Burundi's public tertiary institutions.



## **Jean Crespin Cubahiro (Cohort 2), Industrial Engineering**

Crespin, a beneficiary of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, graduated with a degree in Industrial Engineering from the American University of Beirut. In June, he guest lectured on what the academic study of this field entails, and what it was like to study in a country like Lebanon and at a university such as AUB. He also drew on his personal and professional experiences since graduating from AUB to give Cohort 9 students an idea of what industrial engineering career opportunities can look like.

## **Kercy Iribukumusavyi (Cohort 8), English**

This year, Kercy stepped up in admirable fashion to guest lecture in two courses while instructors were traveling – she also spent considerable time and effort to assist and co-teach with these instructors. As a Tujenge Scholar and Alumna, Kercy demonstrated enormous growth in her ability to confidently lead and teach units in these Tujenge courses. She worked closely with English instructor Dominic Nganyu and Sign Language instructor Clinton Harimana in order to ensure a seamless course progression for Cohort 9.

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## Scholar Teachers

In 2025, Scholars benefited from the unique and insights and expertise of alumni who taught entire courses. Each of these volunteers reached out to the Academic Program Director to offer their talents and their time.

All of these Scholar Instructors carried Tujenge's culture of inquiry and curiosity with them, and the Program would not have been able to continue to function academically without them.

**Shalom Iteriteka (Cohort 7), Biology and Chemistry**

**Don Destin Iriho, Karen Tuyizigire, and Eric Nkurunziza (Cohort 7), Philosophy and Religious Studies**

**Hussein Bitambuka (Cohort 3), Programming**

**Yousra Hassan and Michael Tuyizigire (Cohort 8), Human Origins and Evolution**

**Satia Iganze and Michael Tuyizigire (Cohort 8), Math**

**Carlène Bukuru (Cohort 8), English**



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# Third Annual Tujenge Alumni Conference

In June, Tujenge held its third alumni conference. For the first time, the conference was held both live in the classroom and on Zoom so that Board members and Tujenge Scholars in other parts of the world could join. The following guest speakers and presentations were featured:

- Eddy Kubwimana (Cohort 4), Ashesi University, Ghana  
Entrepreneurship as Impact: How Starting Now Can Empower Your Community and Your Future
- Rosine Ininahazwe (Cohort 7), Université Lumière, Burundi<sup>1</sup>  
Navigating the Local University System
- Yango Baricako (Cohort 5), University of the People, United States (remote)  
Rejected But Not Defeated
- Jean Luc Ishimwe (Cohort 3), Swarthmore College, United States  
Fundamental Principles of Locomotion in Granular Media
- Igor Gass Iyacu (Cohort 2), Northwestern University, United States  
Reimagining Safety: The Calyx Helmets Journey
- Ciella Ininahazwe (Cohort 4), Northwestern University, United States  
Bridging the Gap in Scientific Data by Enabling Local Communities to Oversee Data Collection

A video of the 2025 conference may be accessed using the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0H0wHYJDJQ>



Snapshot from the video of the conference

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<sup>1</sup> By September, Rosine was awarded a scholarship and began her undergraduate studies at Kyungdong University in South Korea.

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# Scholar Projects and Activities

## Korerwa Project Trip to Mwaro (Cohorts 7, 8, and 9)

In early July, the Korerwa project – originally co-founded by Cohort 7's Rosine and Don Kelly – organized a trip to the Kwa Miganda Cultural Center in the province of Mwaro.



At the cultural center, students and staff learned about the historic traditional life of Burundi. This included cultural beliefs and practices around horticulture, herbal remedies, child care, marriage, and other aspects of daily life in Burundi before the time of colonization. The Korerwa website can be accessed here: <https://korerwakr.blogspot.com/>

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## Ubuntu Project (Cohorts 6, 7, 8, and 9)

This year, the Ubuntu Project continued to meet. Interested Cohort 9 students have joined, and the group met with founding alumni on a few occasions for guidance to ensure the continuity and mission of the project.

## Burundian Sign Language Club (Cohorts 6, 7, 8, and 9)



As an added treat, Tujenge Scholars raised money to bring cookies, beignets, and Fanta to the children at the school.

In the summer of 2023, Juste Nsavyamahoro (Cohort 6), who is fluent in Burundian Sign Language and had been an advocate for the deaf community in Burundi for several years, founded Tujenge's first student club when he began teaching Sign Language after class. Since then, Sign Language has become a part of Tujenge's curriculum and the club has continued to meet and expand its activities. In 2025, the cross-cohort Sign Language WhatsApp group remained active, and Scholars made at least two trips to local Deaf schools, organized by Tujenge's Sign Language instructor, to teach and interact with Deaf primary school students.



Every Wednesday evening, the Sign Language instructor also accompanies a small group of Cohort 9 students to the Deaf Fellowship in Bujumbura town center.

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## Girls Out (Cohorts 8 and 9)



In this student project, Scholars engaged in local initiatives to empower young Burundian women. Their simple yet effective approach is to organize events where girls gather for sports and physical exercise, “to take care of our physical and mental health,” according to the group. The meetings build self-esteem among Bujumbura’s young women, as sports are generally seen as being the domain of boys and men; in addition to the secondary effect of improved self-confidence from peer solidarity.

## Tujenge Stars (Cohorts 8 and 9)

In November, the Tujenge Stars, a student-organized team, competed in and won the final of the English Quiz hosted by the Buja English Quiz Club. The Tujenge Stars emerged victorious in the Grand Final against the team from the University of Burundi Department of Medicine. Go team!

To the right: Satia, Gaël, John, and Clerry accept their championship award from the host of the competition.



## Mastercard Foundation Scholar Projects

### Pie Surwavuba (Cohort 6) and Cherif Bukuru (Cohort 5)

In February, Pie from Cohort 6 received a microgrant from the Mastercard Foundation at USIU-Africa to implement a community service project. Pie decided that he wanted to give back to Mirehe Primary School in Rutana, where he went to school as a child. His project addressed some basic needs at the school, such as replacing broken windows – and was documented by fellow USIU-Africa student and Tujenge alum Cherif Bukuru (Cohort 5), who is studying Film Production.

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## Benitha Irakiza (Cohort 4)

At the end of 2024, in December, Benitha – who is also a student at USIU-Africa – used her Mastercard Foundation grant to create a better learning environment for primary students, too. Benitha oversaw the donation of 30 wooden benches and desks to ECOFO Rubirizi 1 in Mutimbuzi, Bujumbura.



## Environmentalism – Cadie Naomie Muhoza (Cohort 7)

Naomie, currently a student in International Business Administration at Kyungdong University in South Korea, participated with a nonprofit organization in Burundi called Ishaka 2250. The organization seeks to promote the achievement of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, including mitigating the effects of climate change and advocating for other environmental causes. As a student at Tujenge, Naomie developed her passion for environmental advocacy and led an initiative to reduce Tujenge’s plastic consumption. She maintains her engagement in this cause in Burundi even from abroad.



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## Mental Health Awareness – Martha Benitha Ikezwe (Cohort 8)

### TUJENGE AFRICA FOUNDATION

She is one of the 15 changemakers selected for the UNLEASH x RIVET Mindforward Campaign grant. She received a microgrant of USD 750 to develop her idea, enabling her to launch an awareness project in the rural areas of Bubanza Province. The project aims to address the root causes of mental health issues, promote preventive strategies, and educate communities on how to support individuals living with mental health conditions.

Martha Benitha'8



## Yale Model African Union (Cohorts 4, 6, and 7)

In the Spring, seven Tujenge Scholars were able to participate in the Yale Model African Union conference in Nairobi, thanks to the generous support of Tujenge Board Member Stephen Peel. Six Tujenge Scholars from USIU-Africa and one Scholar from Yale were in attendance. This was a valuable learning experience and networking opportunity for the Scholars, whose majors include Economics and International Relations. Were it not for the Tujenge delegation, Burundi would not have been represented at the conference at all. Many thanks to Mr. Peel for making it possible!



Left to right: Juste, Innocent, Pie, Tessy, Alain, Deborah, and Raoul

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## Youth Potential in Action (Cohort 9)

With Ami-Eloge of Cohort 9 on the Executive Committee, Youth Potential in Action seeks to bring art to rural areas of Burundi.



Above left: Ami-Eloge with the rest of the Executive Committee.  
Above right: “Vibrating Memory,” by local artist Florent Mwarabu, age 20

The group can be found @youthpotentialinaction on Instagram.

## Young Entrepreneur Mugara Changemakers (YEMC) (Cohort 9)

One of Tujenge’s most active student organizations this year has been YEMC, founded by Cohort 9’s Don Bertille. The group seeks to provide aid, education, and opportunities to Burundian youth, particularly in Don Bertille’s home village in of Mugara in Rumonge.



After a successful fundraising campaign, Don Bertille and her Cohort 9 colleague Laura Louange implemented a charity and educational event in which YEMC donated washable sanitary pads to girls and women and led discussions to combat period stigma.

Left: Louange (Cohort 9), Bertille (Cohort 9), and Naomi (Cohort 4)

The group can be found @yemc\_2025 on Instagram.

*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 far from exhaustive. To find more and stay up to date, visit Tujenge’s Instagram account @tujengeafrica or LinkedIn page.*

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## Cohort 8 Graduation

The graduation ceremony for Cohort 8 in June, organized by Program Manager Jean de Dieu Ndayishimiye, was a great success. Shalom Iteriteka (Cohort 7) did a fantastic job translating from English to Kirundi for all the friends and family members present.

In the evening, Tujenge hosted a graduation dinner for Cohort 8 and invited alumni as well. Almost all eight cohorts were represented at the dinner!



Student projects such as Girls Out, Korerwa, and Stand Together earned Tujenge's Leadership Award. Individual recipients of the award were Michael Tuyizigire, Carlène Bukuru, and Clerry Arakaza, pictured below.



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## HALI Indaba

In September, College Counselor Ashraf Munyi and Program Director Carol Jean Gallo attended the HALI Access Network annual conference, known as the Indaba, in Naivasha, Kenya. Representatives from high schools and other bridge programs from in Africa were in attendance, as well as university admissions officers from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the United States. Tujenge also had the chance to exchange stories and ideas with the representative from Kigutu International Academy – this was the first Indaba where Tujenge was not the only educational program from Burundi. The Indaba was invaluable for its learning experiences as well the opportunity to make new connections, workshop ideas, and reinforce existing relationships.



Above: Carol browses the University of Pennsylvania table at the college fair

Left: Tujenge and Kigutu International Academy at the Indaba

Back in Nairobi, Carol and Ashraf met up with Tujenge alumni studying at USIU-Africa. They had a chance to have lunch with college counselors from Kigutu International Academy and Elimisha Kakuma, and some alumni of those organizations as well. It was a great opportunity to make new connections and catch up with Tujenge Scholars in Kenya!



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## U.S. College Tour

In the Spring, Program Director Carol Jean Gallo visited 20 colleges and universities in the United States (two of which were virtual meetings). In-person visits, to the extent they are possible, are crucial for maintaining and developing a friendly working relationship with college admissions offices. In particular, this builds the reputation of Tujenge as a trustworthy institution and demonstrates Tujenge's genuine interest. These relationships are mutually beneficial.

Several of the colleges and universities Carol visited are also places where Tujenge Scholars are currently studying, so the trip also served the purpose of alumni outreach. Carol met with Tujenge Scholars currently studying at or recently graduated from Amherst, Northwestern, Yale, Oberlin, Marist, Vassar, Harvard, Wesleyan, Dartmouth, Smith, and Swarthmore.

Carol was also on a panel at the International Studies Association (ISA) in Chicago, where she shared insights about Tujenge's work with academics from universities around the United States and Canada. Darlène (Cohort 7) and Eliphase (Cohort 5), both studying at Northwestern, joined Carol for the ISA's Peace Studies reception. Acquaintances from Carol's days at Cambridge and her previous participation at ISA conferences were impressed with these bright Tujenge Scholars.



Several of these visits would not have been possible without the help and support of inaugural Program Director Benjamin Dickensheets and his Cornell colleague Katy Lindquist, who were kind enough to drive Carol all over Massachusetts and upstate New York to visit admissions offices. Gratitude also goes to the ISA, which awarded Carol a travel grant to cover the cost of room and board in Chicago.



Above: Carol with Tujenge Scholars from Cohorts 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 in Chicago

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Carol also coordinated her plans to visit Brad’s parents at the same time that two Cohort 6 students were on spring break and were also planning to visit. She met them in Findlay, Ohio, and the visit coincided with her birthday.

Brad’s parents – Sonny and Jan – were not only generous in hosting Carol and the two Tujenge Scholars in their home, they also drove them to and from the airport; a long journey for which there are no public transportation options. On top of that, Sonny and Jan drove the Tujenge team two hours each way from Findlay to Oberlin and back. After Carol met with Oberlin admissions officers, the group met up with the two Tujenge Scholars studying at Oberlin for lunch and a birthday celebration.



Right: Faith (Cohort 6, Harvard), Tharcisse (Cohort 6, Oberlin), Carol, Holiness (Cohort 6, Wesleyan), and Eric (Cohort 7, Oberlin).

Above: Tharcisse, Holiness, Carol, and Faith

Top right: Over a year since being at Tujenge together, Faith and Eric greet each other

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## Selected 2024-25 Admissions and Matriculations<sup>2</sup>

Jean Trésor Haragakiza (Cohort 2)	University of Edinburgh (MSc) (Scotland; Mastercard Scholar)
Sotaire Kwizera (Cohort 3)	UC Berkeley (MDP) (United States; Mastercard Scholar)
Jean Luc Ishimwe (Cohort 3)	Duke University (PhD) (United States)
Clair-Kevin Nshimirimana (Cohort 4)	Yale University (MA) (United States)
Chimène Mugisha (Cohort 6)	Bujumbura International University (Burundi)
Liévin Munyemana (Cohort 6)	Université de Lumière (Burundi)
Shalom Iteriteka (Cohort 7)	Oberlin College (United States)
Jean Christophe Niyongere (Cohort 7)	University of Burundi (Burundi; Brad Gasser Scholar)
Audace Irivuzimana (Cohort 7)	Université du Grands Lacs (Burundi; Brad Gasser Scholar)
Yalled Irakoze (Cohort 7)	Université du Lac Tanganyika (Burundi; Brad Gasser Scholar)
Félicien Bukuru (Cohort 7)	Olivia University (Burundi; Brad Gasser Scholar)
Thierry Butoyi (Cohort 7)	Olivia University (Burundi; Brad Gasser Scholar)
Belle Ange Ngabirano (Cohort 7)	Haverford College (United States)
Emmanuel Butoyi (Cohort 7)	National Institute of Public Health (Burundi; Brad Gasser Scholar)
Lyse Claudia Ilera (Cohort 7)	Ashesi University (Ghana; Mastercard Scholar)
Précieuse Ingabire (Cohort 7)	Kyungdong University (South Korea)
Rosine Ininahazwe (Cohort 7)	Kyungdong University (South Korea)
Verité Gahimbare (Cohort 7)	Université de Montpellier (France)
Becky Carmine Igiraneza (Cohort 8)	African Leadership University (Rwanda; Mastercard Scholar)
Carlène Bukuru (Cohort 8)	African Leadership University (Rwanda; Mastercard Scholar)
Etoile Pascale Igiraneza (Cohort 8)	African Leadership University (Rwanda; Mastercard Scholar)
Kercy Iribukumusavyi (Cohort 8)	African Leadership University (Rwanda; Mastercard Scholar)
Clerry Arakaza (Cohort 8)	Northwestern University (United States)

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<sup>2</sup> All degrees listed are bachelor's degrees unless otherwise noted.

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Guy Trésor Karikera (Cohort 8)	Wesleyan University (United States)
Martha Bénitha Ikezwe (Cohort 8)	Ashoka University (India)
Minia Marie Bamina (Cohort 8)	Smith College (United States)
Naissa Bessie Izere (Cohort 8)	Kyungdong University (South Korea)
Yves Tuyizere (Cohort 8)	Kyungdong University (South Korea)
Tessie Mpundu (Cohort 8)	Aix Marseille Université (France)
Yousra Hassan (Cohort 8)	North Central College (United States)
Satia Iganze (Cohort 8)	Carleton College (United States)
Celia Ishimwe (Cohort 9)	Gebze Teknik Üniversitesi (Turkey)
Joyce Bayubahe (Cohort 9)	Ecole Nationale des Sciences Appliquées (Morocco)
Franck Ndayishimiye (Cohort 9)	Université de Limoges (France)
Maurice Mbarushimana (Cohort 9)	Ufa University of Science and Technology (Russia)
Laura Nduwimana (Cohort 9)	North Central College (United States)



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## Selected University Graduations 2025<sup>3</sup>

Inès Colyse Izere (Cohort 2)	Organizational Communication (MA) Université de Lorraine (France)
Hussein Bitambuka (Cohort 3)	Computer Science Marist University (United States; Mastercard Scholar) <sup>4</sup>
Etienne Mugisha (Cohort 3)	Economic Science and Management Université Sagesse d'Afrique (Burundi; Brad Gasser Scholar)
Annie Stardess Karitonze (Cohort 3)	Mathematics and Computer Science (double major) Smith College (United States)
Jean Luc Ishimwe (Cohort 3)	Mathematics and Physics (double major) Swarthmore College (United States)
Rebecca Irakiza (Cohort 3)	Neuroscience and Human Rights Studies (double major) Trinity College (United States; Mastercard Scholar)
Jean Orry Butwari (Cohort 3)	Applied Informatics in Economics Belgorod State University (Russia)
Sotaire Kwizera (Cohort 3)	Economics and Computer Science (double major) Berea College (United States)
William Niyonsenga (Cohort 4)	Civil Aviation Moscow State Technical University of Civil Aviation (Russia)
Eddy Kubwimana (Cohort 4)	Computer Science Ashesi University (Ghana; Mastercard Scholar)
Elvira Ishimwe (Cohort 4)	Mathematics (Physics concentration; minors in Digital & Computational Studies and French & Francophone Studies) Bates College (United States)
Paul Claudel Izabayo (Cohort 4)	Computer Science Carleton College (United States)
Lynca Kaminka (Cohort 4)	Computer Science and Mathematics (double major) Amherst College (United States)
Emmanuella Itangishaka (Cohort 4)	International Business Administration USIU-Africa (Kenya; Mastercard Scholar)
Nadine Kanyambo (Cohort 4)	Psychology USIU-Africa (Kenya; Mastercard Scholar)

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<sup>3</sup> All degrees listed are bachelor's degrees unless otherwise noted.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that after 2019, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program discontinued funding undergraduate programs for African students applying to universities in the United States.

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Erica Nshimirimana (Cohort 4)

Software Engineering  
African Leadership University (Rwanda; Mastercard Scholar)

Ciella Iteriteka (Cohort 4)

Nursing  
KNUST (Ghana; Mastercard Scholar)

Onesphore Minani (Cohort 4)

French Translation and Writing  
University of Burundi (Burundi)

Nick-Aurel Mugirashaka (Cohort 4)

Information Science and Global Development (double major)  
Cornell University (United States)



*A financial overview for 2025 can be obtained as a separate report from Tujenge's financial management staff.*

*Thank you so much for making Tujenge's work possible!*