

# Orphans of Rwanda

# update

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## OUR MISSION

Orphans of Rwanda, Inc. (ORI) is dedicated to helping orphans and other socially vulnerable young people in Rwanda pursue a university education and ultimately become leaders in fostering economic development and social reconciliation. ORI provides holistic support—including tuition, housing, health care and a range of supplemental training programs—to ensure that its students are prepared to excel.



*Above Right: ORI students at the National University of Rwanda (NUR) in Butare*

## ORI's New Students Begin Their Studies at Rwanda's Top Universities

ORI is proud to announce that our new class of 68 students recently began their university careers with the term that started in January 2008. These extremely talented young people will benefit not only from the opportunity to obtain a university degree, but also from studying at top-tier institutions.

The **National University of Rwanda (NUR)**, located in Butare in southern Rwanda, is considered Rwanda's most prestigious university. With approximately 8,500 students, NUR is known for its talented student population and the breadth of its academic offerings. Previously, ORI had only one student attending NUR and this year **almost half the new class—31 ORI students—was accepted there**. These students are planning to major in subjects such as management, accounting, psychology, biology and math.

The **School of Finance and Banking (SFB)**, located in Kigali, is a relatively young university but has quickly gained a reputation for being the premier Rwandan institution for the study of finance. **Sixteen first-year students will be attending SFB this year**, bringing the total number of ORI students there to 21. Our students at SFB aspire to financial careers and will be studying subjects such as accounting and financial management. We expect that as Rwanda's economy grows, SFB graduates will play a leading role in the future of Rwanda's finance sector.

In all, over two-thirds of our new students are now attending NUR and SFB. Our other new students are attending schools such as the Kigali Health Institute and the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology, which are also well regarded for their high academic standards and excellent programs. The beginning of the school year is always an exciting time for ORI and we are looking forward to a terrific first year for our new students!



*SFB student Theophile Namahoro*



## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

# Interview with Julliet Busingye

Recently elected President of ORI's Student Government

A second year student studying computer science at the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST), Julliet was recently elected President of the Student Government. She lives in a group house with other ORI students who also attend KIST. Julie Lelek, one of our Rwanda-based Program Managers, interviewed Julliet to discuss her motivation to become a student government leader, her goals for the ORI student body in the coming year, and her personal aspirations.

*Left: Julliet and Charles Habonimana, her predecessor as President*

### Julie: Why did you decide to run for President of the student government?

Julliet: I feel connected to the students and I wanted to help them by using my leadership skills. I thought running for President was the best way to show my dedication and to be responsible. I had confidence, since I have been involved with ORI programs before. I also wanted to see if other students had confidence in me and would vote for me.

### Julie: How did you become such an excellent public speaker?

Julliet: In secondary school, I practiced speaking in a club called Speak Out. It also helped my leadership skills because it encouraged women to become leaders. I was able to attend workshops with Speak Out and I always admired women who gave speeches; I wanted to be like them. I like being able to share my ideas and experiences with my fellow students by speaking in front of them.

### Julie: What do you want to accomplish this year as President?

Julliet: First, I want to help students promote their own leadership skills. I want them to feel okay talking to a room full of 100 people, because then they will have confidence in themselves! Second, I want to promote student social relations, like visiting each other at group houses and helping each other like brothers and sisters would. Third, students should manage their time effectively and the student government will try to help them accomplish that. Then they can be effective in everyday life.

### Julie: What are your aspirations after graduation?

Julliet: After I graduate, I would like to set up an organization to help other girls. I would especially like to encourage them to study science, because most Rwandan girls think they are not capable of excelling at science and mathematics. I want to teach them to work hard and tell them they are just as capable as men. And, I want to contribute to my country.

## Spotlight: New Additions to the ORI Team



**Julie Lelek**  
Program Manager  
(based in Rwanda)

Julie is a graduate of Fordham University with a degree in Political Science and a concentration in International Politics. During her college career, Julie gained significant international experience by studying abroad and by volunteering with Habitat for Humanity in

Guatemala. While studying in Vietnam, she volunteered at a juvenile detention center and an organization that worked with street children in Hanoi. After graduation, Julie worked in the development and outreach department of Human Rights Watch, where she helped plan fundraising events in North America and Western Europe.



**Kimberly Greenberg**  
Development &  
Communications Associate  
(based in New York)

Kimberly graduated with honors from Wesleyan University, where she majored in French and an interdisciplinary program combining European history, literature and philosophy. She has won a number of awards and prizes for her writing

and she co-founded Wesleyan Without Borders, which conducted health care development projects in Mexico and Peru. She is currently serving as the chair of the advisory committee for "Channel Peace: A Journal on International Conflict and Mediation," sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace.

Michael Brochner, ORI's Executive Director, spent several weeks this winter with our students, our partners and our team in Kigali. To document his experiences, Michael created the Orphans of Rwanda blog Isoko.

*Students with ORI Executive Director  
Michael Brochner*



## Letters from Rwanda

Depending on its pronunciation, “Isoko” is a Kinyarwanda word that can mean either “the source” or “market.” The word perfectly characterizes the blog’s intent—to serve as both a source for the latest news on our students and our work, and a place to exchange ideas. The following passages are excerpts from Isoko. To read more, please visit: <http://orphansofrwanda.org/blog/>

### January 24th, 2008

Before I arrived in Rwanda last week, everyone asked what I was most looking forward to doing during my trip. My answer didn’t take much thought, as I couldn’t wait for the all-student meeting, which took place this past weekend. Aside from seeing our students all together, which I knew would be wonderful, I was aware that something special would be happening at this meeting: **ORI student government elections!**

The first thing that impressed me when I arrived was how prepared the candidates were. No jeans and casual shirts for them—they showed up dressed for a presentation to their peers. Also, the students had written out their speeches and it was clear that many had practiced them beforehand.

The election for President of the student body was the most hotly contested, with four candidates on the slate. We had Yassin Nsabimana (a student at ULK), Julliet Busingye (KIST), Oliver Kansime (Kigali Institute of Health; Oliver is also a woman’s name in Rwanda), and Laila Uwera (KIST). Laila, in her speech, went the inspirational route: “I am competing for the position of ORI Student President with the aim of ensuring that students would be people of purpose and vision who will make a difference in our nation. Hence, ORI students would not only be quality leaders in Rwanda but also globally.”

It was a close race, but Julliet Busingye won a plurality and is the first woman to be elected President of the ORI student government.

The students did a fantastic job presenting their cases, especially for the positions of university and group house representatives. This was great to see, as one of ORI’s goals is to empower students to assume responsibility for advocating for their needs and the needs of other students. For example, if there’s an issue that affects students in a particular group house and that requires the assistance of an ORI staff member, we expect the student representative to take the initiative in addressing the concerns of their constituents.

Watching the students run their own elections... seeing students meet and greet each other like members of a big family. This is why I knew the meeting would be the highlight of my trip.

### February 5, 2008

Theophile is a second-year student studying accounting at the School of Finance and Banking. When I asked him what he aspires to in his career, he said he wanted to be an extremely well-trained accountant. He has even started thinking about the certifications he would like to receive from the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (the largest global professional accountancy body).

Theophile’s personal story is emblematic of the obstacles our students overcome on their path to ORI. When the genocide began, his family went into hiding in houses and fields, but the militia eventually found his father, who was severely beaten. His father survived the genocide, but died a year afterwards because of complications from the beating. Theophile’s mother—who lost every member of her family—suffers from post-traumatic illness and cannot work. Theophile’s incredible persistence enabled him to graduate from high school, and he achieved this despite being hospitalized for several months during his senior year as the result of a car accident.

Why is Theophile’s desire to crunch numbers a good thing for Rwanda? Since arriving here, I have been talking to people about the future of Rwanda’s economy, and one of the recurring themes is the lack of trained financial professionals who can give an accurate assessment of a company or enterprise’s finances.

For potential investors, the absence of comprehensive financial statements makes it difficult to determine an enterprise’s economic history or prospects for growth. There are probably dozens of businesses that have tremendous potential, but might have trouble attracting investments or bank loans because of the state of their financial records. A World Bank study on private capital flows to developing countries found that the “lack of qualified accountants and auditors” is a “common problem” that inhibits the growth of emerging markets such as Rwanda’s. Theophile and his SFB classmates are going to become the highly skilled financial professionals who will play a central role in the growth of Rwanda’s economy.

Orphans of Rwanda, Inc.  
16 Highland Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

212-744-0190, ext. 126  
[www.orphansofrwanda.org](http://www.orphansofrwanda.org)

## Events in New York and California Raise Scholarship Funds for ORI

**From coast to coast, ORI fundraising events raised more than \$44,000 this past fall.**

The first of these events took place in New York on November 6 at PM Lounge in the Meatpacking District. More than 250 ORI supporters heard from keynote speaker (and ORI Board member) Dr. Josh Ruxin, Assistant Clinical Professor of Public Health at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and Country Director for the Millennium Village Project Rwanda. Stephanie Nyombayire, a Rwandan who is a senior at Swarthmore College and co-founder of the Genocide Intervention Network, also gave a stirring speech to the crowd. The event earned \$26,000 for ORI.

The following week, a benefit was held in San Francisco, with more than 450 supporters attending the event at the Herbst International Exhibition Hall in the Presidio. The keynote speaker was Dr. Paul Farmer, a global leader in the field of public health and the founding director of Partners in Health (one of ORI's partner organizations). Simin Marefat, one of ORI's volunteers, played a key role in organizing the event and a silent auction of her breathtaking photographs helped raise additional funds. The efforts of Dr. Farmer, Simin and other ORI volunteers in San Francisco resulted in a terrific night that raised \$18,000 for ORI.



*Dr. Paul Farmer with ORI Board Member Cassia van der Hoof Holstein, ORI volunteer Simin Marefat, ORI Co-Founder Dai Ellis, and ORI Executive Director Michael Brotchner*

Following the benefit, the San Francisco Chronicle profiled Simin in an article called "Acting Globally, Living Locally," which described Simin's tremendous work with ORI, her volunteer experiences throughout the world and her amazing life story. The article can be found on the home page of the ORI website.

Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone who helped us raise enough money through these events to fund comprehensive scholarships for 20 students this year.