

An African Trailblazer: Computers for Schools Burundi, Rotary and Burundi's Five Schools of Excellence

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Emmanuel Ngendakuriyo, Founder and Executive Director of Computers for Schools Burundi (CFSB) believes that ICT integration into the Burundian education system and focused education for innovation in e-waste management are key to capitalize on Fourth Industrial Revolution opportunities.

A principal goal of CFSB is to modernize the Burundi education system through universal ICT education in primary and secondary schools, thereby creating access to and equity in digital skills for Burundian youth. The vision is to promote and integrate the use of ICT and 21st Century



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Zambians give handkerchief salute to fallen statesman Kaunda



Zambia's first president, Kenneth Kaunda, died on 17 June at a military hospital where he had been admitted with pneumonia.

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Burundi's youth to become leaders in scientific research, ICT innovation, and administration in both the private and public sectors. The Burundi government set up the Five Schools of Excellence project (2016-2017) to prepare Burundian youth to acquire the 21st Century skill sets necessary to assume future leadership positions in public and private administration, scientific research centers and be part of digital innovation initiatives. The schools are located throughout the country with student selection criteria based on Burundi's national test. Applicants complete a test of French and Mathematics which determines the highest-scoring Burundian students at the end of the school year.

One CfsB project goal is to equip each School of Excellence with ICT Labs, coupled with best digital pedagogy practices teacher training to facilitate student centered education. Innovation, creativity, and digital entrepreneurship are crucial 21st Century skills for underserved Burundian youth to acquire. The CfsB project is intended to serve as an inspiration and best practices guide for the Education Ministry and Burundi's secondary schools. During school holidays, students and the community surrounding the equipped schools use the computer labs to benefit their community with continued ICT training.

The current CfsB curriculum focuses on 21st-century skills that today's students need to succeed in their careers, addressing the increasing power of technology and digitization. A majority of African firms report very low to moderate levels of business preparedness among recent school graduates for five key Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies: "Failure to recognize and capitalize on [Fourth Industrial Revolution] opportunities, conversely, will impose considerable risks on African stakeholders: Without attempts to move beyond existing models of innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital growth on the continent, African businesses risk falling further behind" (Ndung'u & Sign, 2020, p. 62).

CfsB has partnered with Rotary Clubs, nationally and internationally. Rotary is made up of three parts: clubs, Rotary International, and The Rotary Foundation. Collectively, Rotary works to make lasting change in communities and around the world. CfsB, the Rotary Club Bujumbura-Doyen, the Rotary Club Ottawa, and the Rotary Club West Ottawa are working together to analyze a possible grant application through Rotary International. The Rotary Club of New York is providing additional funding. The active board of CfsB is composed of members of local, regional, international companies, nongovernmental organizations, and the government.

A renewed focus on universal access to and equity in ICT for Burundian youth requires a two-pronged approach: investment in ICT equipment and implementation of ICT curricula with targeted efforts to develop 21st-century skillsets. The partnership between Computers for Schools Burundi, Rotary and the Five Schools of Excellence is an African trailblazer harnessing the power of multiple stakeholders for the common good of Burundian youth.

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